

Beyond the Islamic state

A new perspective on Hizballah's policies

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Abstract

Islamist movements have traditionally been analyzed on the basis of their goal of establishing an Islamic State. But how should these movements be understood when this seemingly fundamental goal is abandoned?

The following is a study of the Lebanese Hizballah, where I pursue a hypothesis that the aim of this party is to get a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon. By studying different components of the Shiite Lebanese society; a local community in South Lebanon, the religious leader Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, Hizballah itself, and their Shiite critics, I argue that this party has managed to get a hegemony over the Shiite community. Through this hegemony Hizballah has managed to become the dominant political force in Lebanon, and is thus able to control the direction of national politics as well.

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Notes on transliteration

I have chosen to employ the transliteration used by the International Journal of Middle East Studies:

ء 'a

ب b

ت t

ث th

ج j

ح ḥ

خ kh

د d

ذ dh

ر r

ز z

س s

ش sh

ص ṣ

ض ḍ

ط ṭ

ظ ḏ

ع 'a

غ gh

ف f

ق q

ك k

ل l

م m

ن n

ه h

و w

ي y

ة a, in the construction -at

ال al-

The long vowels are transliterated as follows:

ا ā

ي ī

و ū

Doubled:

ئ iyy, with final form ī

ؤ uww, with final form ū

Diphthongs:

ئ ay

ؤ aw

Short vowels:

a,u,i

The *Hamzat al-waṣl* is not written.

For names of persons I have given the name in full transliteration in square brackets the first time the name is mentioned, thereafter only the common English spelling is used. Names are always given with the capital letter first, for example Fadlallah [Faḍl Allāh]. In cases where there is no common English spelling, such as *al-Khū 'ī*, I have chosen to use the Arabic transliteration. The same is done for some specific terms for which it is difficult to give a simple English translation.

Topographs are written as they appear on signs in Latin script in Lebanon.

As for the transliteration of words in sequence, I have chosen to transliterate all words in pausal modus. All transliterations are italicized. The first letter in a sentence is written with a capital letter.

Translations from Arabic or Norwegian are mine.

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1 Introduction

Islamists and their relation to the ideal of an Islamic state is a subject which occupies researchers in the field and is increasingly the subject of debate. This is not least due to the fact that few Islamists have actually managed to achieve the goal of erecting an Islamic State. For some this is taken as a sign that political Islam has failed¹, but others argue that instead of focusing only on the state, one should appreciate these movements ability to reposition themselves and adjust to the developments taking place in their respective countries. A trend has emerged where Islamist movements are increasingly analyzed on the basis of other features than that of their intent to establish an Islamic state, one of these being to pursue a strategy of (re-) Islamization of the society.²

This work continues along this line of analysis by studying the case of the Lebanese Hizballah [Ḥizb Allāh] and the strategy it uses to advance its ideas. Hizballah has puzzled and fascinated scholars and observers of Islamism and of Lebanese politics since its inception in the early eighties and to date. The movement started out as different groups with two important views in common; they were all deeply inspired by and supportive of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, led by Ayatollah Khomeini [al-Khumaynī], and they were determined to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. When the party declared its existence officially in 1985, with the so-called ‘Open Letter to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and on Earth’, it also made it clear that it was following the guidance of Khomeini and declared its final goal to be the establishment of an Islamic State in Lebanon.

However, following the end of the civil war in Lebanon in 1990, the party was faced with a major dilemma. Should they join the emerging post-war regime, which included other political forces they had sworn to annihilate, or should they remain on the outside of the new political order and pursue their goals from there? They had opposed the agreement that ended the war, the Taif Agreement, but at the same time they were under considerable pressure to lay down their arms and join the other political factions and parties in the new political order. Not least, the Syrians put considerable pressure on them to conform to the new order, as they were now in control over domestic Lebanese affairs, both politically and militarily.

¹ Roy, Olivier (1994): *The Failure of Political Islam* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press

² Ismail p.160-176

As it turned out, an agreement seems to have been stuck between the Syrians and Hizballah: the party was allowed to keep its weapons as they were now considered to be a resistance movement tasked with liberating Lebanese soil on behalf of the Lebanese state, while on the other hand Hizballah was prevented from hampering the Syrian-controlled post-war regime. Nevertheless, the decision about whether to join the new political order was a difficult one for the party and after lengthy internal deliberations they were still not able to reach agreement on this question. A majority of its leadership favoured participation, while a minority, led by its first secretary-general Subhi Tufayli [Şubhī al-Ṭufaylī] strongly opposed this. The solution came only after referring the case to Ali Khamenei [‘Alī Khāmīnī], the heir to Khomeini, who gave his blessing to participation, and the party consequently took part in the parliamentary elections of 1992.

At the same time, and in response to these developments, Hizballah declared that it abandoned its goal of establishing an Islamic State in Lebanon, and claimed that this would now only be retained as an ideological project. This challenges a common definition of Islamism as being parties and movements seeking to bring the state itself in conformity with Islamic principles.³ The research question of the thesis is as follows: How should one understand the goals and strategies of an Islamist movement such as Hizballah when it has publicly disavowed the goal of building an Islamic State? While Hizballah is now a part of the Lebanese parliamentary system, the Party continues to insist on keeping its weapons outside the realm of the Lebanese State. How can we make sense of this apparent paradox?

In order to answer these questions, I pose the hypothesis that the aim of Hizballah is to seek a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon. This would allow the Party to retain the goal of setting up an Islamic State as a project for the future, while working through different strategies to prepare the ground for this future state. Such a hegemony would give it the opportunity to prevent Lebanon from becoming a part of a Western backed Arab alliance, thus allowing the Islamic Resistance to continue its armed fight against Israel.

1.1 The structure of the thesis

³ See Cleveland p.426-30

Chapter 2 situates this thesis within a theoretical framework, and presents my approach for analysing Hizballah, while chapter 3 outlines the methodology I have employed.

Chapter 4 of this thesis acts as a brief introduction to Lebanon and its recent history, to Shiites and their history in Lebanon in particular, and it also includes a section on what is often referred to as sectarianism, which plays such an important role in Lebanese politics, and in conjunction with this, it includes an overview of the sectarian-based parliamentary system.

Chapter 5 deals with the southern town of Khiam, where I did my fieldwork, and the question of who the different inhabitants I met there, not least the ones employed in Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah [Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh]'s organization, view as the providers of security in their daily lives, and how they look at the Lebanese state and their place in it.

Chapters 6 and 7 handle Shiite politics on a national level, with a focus on the policies of Hizballah and Fadlallah respectively – how these view their role in the Lebanese state, and which concerns govern their policies. I demonstrate how these conform to the theory of hegemony that I outlined in the introduction, and discuss how this conforms to the findings I made during my fieldwork. Amal, the other Shiite party, is dealt with in chapter 8.

Chapter 9 is devoted to the Shiite critics of the present policies of Hizballah and its allies, what their main concerns are and the policies against which they focus their criticism, and how they view the role of Shiites in the Lebanese state, as opposed to the role envisioned for them by Hizballah.

In chapter 10, the final chapter, I sum up with my findings, and give an overview of where Shiite Lebanese politics are today.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Previous research on Hizballah

In the years that followed the parliamentary elections of 1992, several scholars published books about Hizballah, and a dominant trend established itself in trying to explain its apparent shift in policy. A majority of scholars saw the change as a genuine shift in the party's ideology, a transformation from a revolutionary, Khomeinist movement to a more or less regular political party. What these scholars had in common is that they wrote in English, with a few exceptions, but based their studies mainly on Arabic sources. On the other hand, there were a few scholars who did not see such a shift in Hizballah's policy, but rather an attempt to confront a new reality without changing the basic ideology or goals, only the *modus operandi*.

2.2 A regular political party?

The dominant trend is represented by Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, who in her book *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion* aims at analysing Hizballah's policies in view of their intellectual 'pillars'. Participation in the elections in 1992 is seen by Saad-Ghorayeb as the culmination of the party's 'Lebanization', or openness (*infītāḥ*) policy, and an integration into the democratic political system.⁴ While admitting that democracy is not one of the 'intellectual pillars'⁵ of the party, and that the party considers Islam to represent 'an ideal system capable of fulfilling absolute justice',⁶ she still considers the party to have embraced democracy. She writes that '...although Hizb'ullah does not endorse democracy as the best system of governance on the intellectual level, it endorses it as a system of governance on the political level'.⁷ Saad-Ghorayeb makes a distinction between the intellectual and political dimensions in Hizballah's discourse when she tries to explain the seeming inconsistency of embracing parliamentary democracy on the one hand and an Islamic state on the other. Because the party has stated on

⁴ Saad-Ghorayeb p.46-8.

⁵ Ibid. p.55.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

several occasions that it will not use force to install an Islamic republic, and due to their rhetoric on the concepts of justice and public freedoms, she sees their commitment to democracy as genuine. She acknowledges, however, that there are problems with this logic, as she writes on the very last page of her book, it is ‘...a marriage between the intellectual and the political which cannot persist indefinitely’.⁸

Another scholar who has taken much the same approach is Joseph Alagha, who argues that there has been a genuine shift in the party’s ideology over the years. Like Saad-Ghorayeb, he makes a distinction between the religious and the political spheres, and he also considers participation in elections as a sign of the party’s new *infītāh* policy, or ‘Lebanization’.⁹ This shift is seen in connection with the changes which occurred in the leadership of the party at the time, when Abbas al-Moussawi [‘Abbās al-Mūsawī] was elected as its second Secretary-General. His predecessor Subhi Tufayli is by both authors seen as representing a more uncompromising view concerning participation in the elections of 1992.¹⁰ Alagha states in his conclusion that he considers the party to be an Islamic movement, writing that ‘...it displays, more and more, the characteristics of a nationalist-patriotic pursuing realpolitik (*al-wāqi‘iyya al-siyāsiyya*) when and if this is required by the circumstances’.¹¹ Again it seems possible to detect the same duality as for the question of democracy: it is not profoundly embraced by the party and adopted as an ideological pillar, but rather dictated by the ‘circumstances’. Alagha is obviously aware of this himself, as he continues, ‘...Hizbullah conferred a de facto recognition of the Lebanese state, but not a de jure one. In other words, Hizbullah’s adherence to democratic principles and politics is not based on political-ideological grounds since its political ideology anathematized the Lebanese political system, rather on advancing interests (*al-maṣālīh*) and warding off vices (*al-mafāsīd*)’.¹²

Furthermore, he sees two main shifts in the party’s policies. First, their policies have become state-centered, to the degree that they are now involved in law-making, and second, the role of *al-walī al-faqīh* (Khamenei) is diminishing. Concerning the last point, he writes that ‘Hizbullah took the decision and legitimized its participation in democratic processes by recourse to jurisprudential maxims and principles made by legislators such as Muhammad Ra‘d, common Muslims such as Bilal Na‘im, and leaders of Muslim opinion such as Shaykh

⁸ Ibid. p.191.

⁹ Alagha p.150-5.

¹⁰ Saad-Ghorayeb p.47 and Alagha p.208.

¹¹ Alagha p.204.

¹² Ibid.

‘Afif al-Nablusi.’¹³ It is worth noting here that he completely omits the pivotal role played by Khamenei, the reigning *faqīh*, even though earlier in his book he writes that ‘...Hizballah presented its findings [on participating in the elections] to Imam Khamina`i and requested from him a formal legal opinion (*istifta`*)’.¹⁴ Only after this was secured did the party announce its decision to participate in these elections, not after obtaining the opinion of Mr. Na‘īm!

Another of these books is the study by Judith Palmer Harik called *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*. It is different from the two studies mentioned above in two respects. First, she relies overwhelmingly on English-language sources, and second, it targets a mainly American audience, because the main argument is that Hizballah is not necessarily just a terrorist organization, and should no longer be classified as such by American authorities, but also a resistance movement with a legitimate right to resist the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon.¹⁵ Following the other studies, she argues that participation in the elections in 1992 represents ‘...a clear signal that it had changed its radical course and was abiding by the time-honored rules of Lebanon’s electoral game’. She goes on to state that these elections ‘...enhanced the Party of God’s legitimacy as a mainstream political party with a resistance wing ...’.¹⁶

The main achievement of her study, as I see it, is that she clearly explains what she dubs the ‘two-track strategy’ of the Syrians, which is supporting Hizballah and its Islamic Resistance on the one hand, while on the other hand also supporting the Lebanese state and its institutions. The essence of this deal is: Hizballah would have to put aside its aspirations to establish an Islamic republic in Lebanon, ‘soft-pedal’ its radical ideology and join the post-war, Syrian-controlled political regime as a part of the ‘loyal opposition’; the Lebanese authorities would, in turn bestow upon Hizballah the right to liberate occupied Lebanese territories on behalf of the Lebanese state, which would stay out of their way while they were undertaking this mission.¹⁷ The aim of the Syrians with this strategy, she argues, is to pressure the Israelis into negotiating the return of the Golan Heights. That this strategy has led to skirmishes and confrontations between the Lebanese state and Hizballah is also dealt with,

¹³ Ibid. p.205.

¹⁴ Alagha p.155.

¹⁵ Harik p.195.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.52.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.47.

and particularly the problems that emerged between then-Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri [Rafīq al-Ḥarīrī] and the party.¹⁸

There are other books on Hizballah in English as well, such as Hala Jabers *Born with a Vengeance* and Augustus Richard Norton's *Hezbollah*. The reason for not including these here is that they give an historic overview rather than having an aim of analysing the strategy or ideological foundation of the party. They both represent valuable contributions to our understanding of Hizballah but unlike those I have chosen to include here, they do not offer an argument in this or that direction. Another book which is not included here is Magnus Randstorp's *Hizb 'Allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*. As the title implies, this book is focused on the taking of western hostages in Lebanon in the second half of the eighties and is as such outside the focus of this thesis. An additional reason for not including it is Randstorp's contentious use of sources: for instance, he claims that Fadlallah was a member of the leadership of Hizballah and the source is given as an unattributable interview with a high-ranking Israeli military official; this is highly controversial to say the least.

2.3 A different view

The few scholars with a different approach to analysing the party and its policies have in common that they, to some extent, question the sincerity of the party's abandonment of the ideal of an Islamic state. One of these is Nizar Hamzeh, whose study on Hizballah differs from others in that he focuses on the organizational structure of the party. Contrary to the three studies mentioned above, Hamzeh is very clear as to what he believes is Hizballah's goal: the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon. Like others, he observes that this might not be possible in the imminent future but he claims that this is the goal that the party is working to realize, through various means.

Participation in elections, which for other scholars represents a watershed in the history of the party and a sign of their commitment to working within the framework of the Lebanese political system, is in Hamzeh's view seen as an opportunity for the party to secure increased

¹⁸ Harik p.151-2.

legitimacy and to protect its resistance.¹⁹ According to Hamzeh, the party's view of democracy can be summoned up as 'one man, one vote, once'.²⁰ In his reading of Hizballah's religious ideology and their commitment to it, concepts such as democracy and human rights are not part of it, and '...God given Shari'ah cannot be replaced by such concepts, and *shura* [consultation] among Islamic leaders does not equal democracy'.²¹

According to him, the party has succeeded in establishing what he calls an Islamic order in the parts of the country where they are in control.²² He views the different tactics employed by the party over the years as different *modus operandi*, subject to the changing conditions facing them, but the final goal as always the same: '...seizing political power and establishing a regime governed by the Shari'ah...'.²³ His analysis of Hizballah implies that the party is not sincere when it says that erecting an Islamic regime of some kind is confined to an 'ideological project'.

Hamzeh is not the only scholar to take this approach and many of his readings and conclusions are echoed by Wadah Sharara [Waḍḍāḥ Sharāra] in his study of the party called *The State of Hizballah: Lebanon an Islamic Society (Dawlat Ḥizb Allāh: Lubnān Mujtama' an 'Islāmiyyan)*. Sharara's study is different from that of the other scholars, as his is a sociological study with a focus on the increase in the number of '*ulamā'*', religious scholars, among the Shiites of Lebanon, and their role in Islamizing the society from below. He documents how, starting from the mid-sixties and coinciding with the arrival of Fadlallah to Lebanon, religious education among Shiite Lebanese has spread in an unprecedented manner. An important point in this respect is how families with no previous record of religious learning joined the ranks of the '*ulamā'*', and how he perceives this to be a conscious strategy on part of senior members of this class to build the basis for an Islamic society. He traces this to the arrival of Fadlallah and his setting up the Institute of the Islamic Sharia in what was then East Beirut, which immediately after he established it in 1966 started to educate men of religion (*rijāl al-dīn*). Sharara is among those who claim that Fadlallah had a pivotal role in the establishment of Hizballah. He even goes as far as claiming that it was he who issued the

¹⁹ Hamzeh 121-2.

²⁰ Ibid. p.112.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. p.108.

²³ Ibid. p.141.

infamous fatwa blessing the first of the party's suicide operations, something Fadlallah himself has always denied.²⁴

Sharara argues that the goal of setting up an Islamic state in Lebanon has not changed, the difference being that instead of pushing openly for its implementation, and thus antagonizing large parts of Lebanese society, they have decided to let time work for them. As evidence for this he points to Naim Qasem [Na'im Qāsim], the Deputy Secretary-General of Hizballah, who in his book says that there is no room for the party to leave behind its commitment to erecting an Islamic state, and while he states that they will not use force to implement this, he writes they that will continue to call for this state through *da'wa*, 'proselytizing work'.²⁵

2.4 Other studies on the party in Arabic

Of the many books on Hizballah published in Arabic which I have read, most follow the analysis of Saad-Ghorayeb and Alagha. As an example of these I have chosen the study made by Faḍīl 'Abū Al-Naṣīr published under the title *Hizballah: Truths and Repercussions* (*Hizb Allāh: Haqā'iq wa 'ab'ād*).

He argues that the party is a Lebanese party with a Lebanese agenda, and like Saad Ghorayeb and Alagha he uses participation in elections as a main argument in this respect. However, unlike these two, he points to several dilemmas facing the party in order to become 'a Lebanese political party in all meanings of the word'²⁶ and which he seems to admit are not resolved yet. One of these is the dilemma of legality. According to their religious beliefs, only a system based on *wilāyat al-faqīh* theory can be considered legitimate. Another dilemma for the party is that its commitment to this doctrine places it outside the framework of Lebanese politics (*khārij al-lu'ba al-siyāsiyya al-lubnāniyya*). He also sees a conflict between the followers of Hizballah and the rest of the Lebanese public over the question of resistance, because after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000 the 'ordinary Lebanese' would not necessarily see

²⁴ Interview with Sharāra June 2008.

²⁵ See Qāsim p.40-2.

²⁶ Abū al- Naṣīr p.128.

the need for resistance to liberate the still occupied Sheba farms, but rather favour a peaceful solution to this problem.²⁷

Another feature of this book, not uncommon in Lebanon, is that the author has included a number of 'testimonies', *shahādāt*, at the end of his book. The first part of these testimonies comes from different officials in the party, who comment on different aspects of the party's policies, such as the nature of the party, their view on women, and Palestine. The other part of these testimonies consists of the views of different Lebanese scholars on Hizballah. Among those who have written such statements, by invitation of the author, are scholars such as Raḍwān al-Sayyid, Farīd al-Khazān and Nasīr al-'As'ad.²⁸

The major problem with this study, in my view, is that dilemmas like those raised above are not discussed by the author, but left to be answered by the party itself through one of the many officials he interviewed for his book. An example of this can be found under the heading, 'The most important particularities of the culture of the Hizballah man', in which he leaves it to Shaykh Ḥasan Ḥamāda to draw up the picture of this 'man' and it is then left uncommented.²⁹

Abū al-Naṣir also devotes a chapter to what he dubs 'the Society of the Resistance', *mujtama' al-muqāwama*. The society he describes here is a society of war and jihad, progressing from 'resisting the evil in the self' and 'reforming the human society' to fighting the enemy, i.e. Israel, with weapons. According to him, there will be no peace before the relinquishment of the Jewish state, and this society of resistance is a prerequisite for the continued fight against the enemy. This society, even in peaceful times, lives in a condition of alert, ready for the next fight with the enemy. To uphold this society of resistance, an infrastructure to accommodate its various needs is necessary, and Abū al-Naṣir examines the various branches of this structure. These include different organizations and foundations belonging to the party, such as the *Jihād al-Binā'*, whose role is far broader than that of being a mere (re)construction company; they are also involved in such areas as agriculture, electricity and dealing with unemployment. Another of these institutions is the chain of schools run by the party in the south, Beirut and the Bekaa called *al-Mahdī*, and then there are the different branches of their

²⁷ Ibid. p. 128-9.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 240-67.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 60-2.

information unit, like the TV station *al-Manār*, the radio station *al-Nūr* and the newspaper *al-Ahd*.³⁰

2.5 The need for a new perspective

How do the proponents of the view that Hizballah has become a regular Lebanese party explain the insistence on part of Hizballah to cling on to their weapons and continue their fight against Israel from outside the Lebanese state? One should bear in mind here that the Islamic Resistance is, according to Hizballah itself, their number one priority, to which all other priorities are subsumed. The answer to the question posed above is that they are not able to explain this. They all agree that the resistance is the number one priority of the party, but none of them perceive the problem to any great extent in the inherent conflict for a country to have two armed forces, only one of which is under the control of the state. Their studies are written after the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000, so they have had the possibility of examining statements made by Hizballah about the future of its resistance, yet they seem unable to explain the party keeping its arms and not submitting them to the control of the Lebanese state, whose political system these scholars claim the party is actively engaged in and accepts.

On the other hand, how do the researchers who claim that the goal of establishing an Islamic state continues to be Hizballah's main aim, explain recent developments such as the alliance with a leading Christian politician? Should the statement that the goal of establishing an Islamic state has been abandoned, be viewed as a lie?

Given that none of these studies offers an analysis of the Party which can explain the seemingly inconsistency of being both a political party and an army, nor explain the size and extension of the Party's various branches, I will suggest an analysis based on the hypothesis that the aim of Hizballah is to exert a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon.

As I wrote above in the introduction, Islamist movements are often defined and analysed on the basis that they strive to achieve an Islamic state, whether through overthrowing a regime and replacing it with an Islamic one, or through reforms aimed at bringing the state in

³⁰ Ibid. p. 135-55.

conformity with what is perceived to be Islamic principles. I suggest moving away from the paradigm of the Islamic state and instead using the concept of hegemony when analysing these movements. This would, in my view, offer a more precise assessment of the strategies and goals of these movements. The following, a case study of Hizballah, is therefore presented as one example of these movements.

I argue that this approach allows for a more complete picture of Hizballah to emerge, and thereby broadens our understanding of the party, its choice of strategy and its goals. It will help to explain why the party has chosen to cling on to their arms, while at the same time joining the Lebanese political system. By examining different components of Shiite Lebanon, from the inhabitants of a southern town, via a religious authority such as Fadlallah to Hizballah itself, I hope to show how these relate to each other and how they operate within the same framework.

I will also present Shiite critics of Hizballah. Through this I hope to show that there are other voices to be heard as well. It is of great value when examining the policies of the party to lend an ear to those who criticize them from a religious point of view, and assess how the party reacts to this criticism. This will hopefully also contribute to a more profound understanding of the nature of the motives behind their chosen strategies.

While this is a case study of Hizballah, this study will hopefully encourage a broader approach towards the study of other Islamist movements as well. Shifting the focus from the ideal of an Islamic state to that of seeking hegemony, not least over civil society, will hopefully contribute to a deeper understanding of these movements and their choice of strategy.

2.6 Hegemony

Hegemony is a concept commonly taken to mean the dominance of one group over others, be it a state over other states or non-state actors over other non-state actors, or the dominance within one state of a given group over others. It is, however, necessary to analyse and define this concept in more detail before it can be used to describe the processes which Hizballah has instigated, and continues to employ, in Shiite Lebanon.

The concept of hegemony as it is used here owes a great deal to the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. It should be noted that his – and others’ – contributions to this field are linked to their desire to wrest the control of the state from capitalists, and for the working class to take over the state apparatus. However, one of the main motives for the development of the concept of hegemony was his desire to attempt to analyse how and why the ruling classes in Europe at the time were so successful in retaining power.³¹ This analysis was clearly undertaken with the aim of learning from that experience, so that the working class would be able to construct their own hegemony and thus take control of the state.

To further our understanding of hegemony, the following statement gives an idea of how the concept is understood in Marxism: ‘The concept of hegemony is not a value-neutral term within a positivistic social science. Rather in Gramsci’s work, the concept of hegemony is linked with a complex set of claims about what could be a coherent viewpoint of the world. In this perspective, only a coherent world-view, a well rounded philosophy and related morality, could be hegemonic.’³² This is to indicate that when discussing hegemony, we are dealing with a concept which implies much more than just domination, by force or otherwise, of one group over others. Rather there is a complex of several factors which needs to be in place before we can talk about a hegemony.

Bocock identifies three intertwined yet separate spheres forming the baseline for the conceptualization of hegemony: the economic sphere, the state and civil society.³³ The first, the economic sphere, was the traditional focus of Marxists, and deals with the ownership of the means of production. Control over these were seen as the prerequisite for change, i.e. only after taking over the means of production could the working class establish the socialist state. The state sphere includes the control over the means of violence within a given territory such as the police and armed forces but also the state-funded bureaucracies like the civil service, legal, welfare and educational institutions. The third sphere, civil society, consists of other organizations that are not part of the two abovementioned spheres; they are supported and run by people not belonging to those spheres. Examples would include various religious institutions and the media.

³¹ Scotoni p.7.

³² Bocock p.17.

³³ Bocock p.33.

The borders between these three spheres are not constant but could change, and groups and organizations could in fact belong to more than one of them.

Gramsci went from the traditional Marxist focus of control over the means of production (in order for the working class to take over the state and change the society) to emphasizing the role of ideology and the role of civil society in gaining hegemony. To acquire hegemony was seen by him as a prerequisite for taking over the state itself,³⁴ the final goal of the Marxist party he led, and naturally of other Marxist parties. He clearly saw an important role for intellectuals in this process, to educate the masses and to get them to accept the hegemony of a certain class or group over society. He sees the intellectuals as the ‘element which gives a class its homogeneity and consciousness, which is the element that organizes a class as a social force, and connects this class with the remainder of the population in an “historic block” or in a given social unity’.³⁵

Gramsci also emphasized that a class seeking hegemony seeks to present its interests as common interests, rather than that of its own narrow economic or corporative interests,³⁶ or at least seeks to ensure that these interests do not conflict with those of its allies and partners.

The clearer the ideological foundation of a group that seeks to gain hegemony over others, the more likely it is to succeed, given that it is able, through its intellectuals, to create an understanding for and an acceptance of the hegemony in question. This consent needs to be organized, and here intellectuals are a prerequisite, for they become the connection between leaders and the population.³⁷

The control and use of a repressive apparatus alone would not be sufficient to uphold a hegemony, it would also demand the consent of a majority in order to succeed. The more a group resorts to violence and repression in order to secure its hegemony, the weaker this hegemony will be, and the opposite as well is true – the less violence and the greater the voluntary acceptance and consent on part of a majority of the population, the stronger the hegemony. Ideally a class or a group’s dominance or hegemony should be accepted as an historical necessity. Optimal success is achieved when the ideas of the rulers come to be seen as the norm, as universal ideologies.

³⁴ Bocock p.77.

³⁵ Scotoni p.7.

³⁶ Gramsci p.164.

³⁷ Scotoni p.9.

There is, however, a need to keep at bay other forces that might challenge the hegemony of a given group. The aim would be to marginalize the influence of these groups in society. This can be done in several ways. Some groups could easily be co-opted, ideologically or economically, while others could be met with physical resistance to curb their influence on the population at large.

To sum up: the concept of hegemony, as I will use it in this paper, should be viewed as a few different, yet intertwined hegemonies, or fields of domination: the economic sphere, the state (which includes the military) and civil society. The main focus of this specific thesis will be on what we might call civil society, that is, the non-state actors operating within the Shiite Lebanese societies.

I will not enter into the contested area of what constitutes civil society, for several reasons. Given that the focus of this thesis is on hegemony, I will adopt the maximalist definition of civil society as being groups and organizations of a wide variety, the common marker being that they are voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society, as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state (regardless of that state's political system) or the commercial institutions of the market. This is not to ignore that in practice the boundaries between these three spheres are blurred and negotiable. Gramsci writes about two levels, one he refers to as 'the political society' or the state, and the other as 'the citizen's society (*società civile*)', the totality of those organisms that in common speech are referred to as civil.³⁸ As I have mentioned above, this latter sphere was singled out by Gramsci as being of paramount importance for a group wishing to establish a hegemony, as this is where the battle over the population's hearts and minds are fought. This is not to say that the economic sphere or the state, with its repressive apparatus, is not important, but as I will argue in the thesis, due to the history of the area in question (Lebanon) and the facts on the ground, these two spheres came to play a minor role compared to that of civil society, therefore that is what I will focus on in this thesis.

³⁸ Gramsci p.193.

3 Methodology

3.1 A case study

In order for the hypothesis that Hizballah has been seeking a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon as posed above to be valid, there are certain conditions which need to be fulfilled. One of these is a strong ideological foundation, and through this, the ability to make its policies be viewed as identical with the common interests of the Shiite community. This would have to be achieved with a minimal use of force. To pursue this argument, I have divided the case into four sub cases. These are studies of (1) a local, Shiite community, (2) Hizballah on a national level, (3) the role of Fadlallah and (4) Shiite critics of Hizballah.

As the hypothesis relates to how the Shiites themselves perceive the role of Hizballah and who they see as their protectors and representatives – in addition to the question of whom they refer to for religious guidance – a close study of the Shiite community is inevitable. I therefore opted for a study of a single Shia community, which could serve as an example of the Shiite community as a whole. This kind of case study, where the purpose of the study is to further an understanding of the views of Lebanese Shiites in general, is often referred to as an instrumental case study.³⁹ By studying a particular community, or an organization for that matter, in greater detail, one should be able to obtain a deeper understanding of the greater community.

One of the great advantages of a case study is that the approach is well suited to generating hypotheses,⁴⁰ which is what I undertake in this study. When I began my fieldwork I was quite uncertain about what I would find in the relations between a local Shiite community and the larger Lebanese Shiite community, and its relations with the Lebanese state. My findings led me to the concept that Hizballah seeks to exercise a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon, which is the thesis for which I will argue. That is not to say that my aim is to test or to validate this hypothesis. In order to test a hypothesis, a larger cross-case study will have to be

³⁹ Berg p. 291 and Stake p.445.

⁴⁰ Gerring p.39-43.

undertaken, because a single study such as this one would not offer enough evidence to validate it.

What I try to do here is look at the strategy of Hizballah from a new perspective. As far as I am aware, no-one has argued that seeking hegemony over Shiite Lebanon is the aim of the party.

3.1.1 Fieldwork

The thesis is based on a fieldwork in the southern town of Khiam which I completed in the autumn of 2008 and it took place thanks to the Mabarrat (*Jam 'iyyat al-Mabarrāt al-Khayriyya*) foundation, the charitable foundation of Grand Ayatollah Fadlallah. Initially I wanted to do my fieldwork with the party itself, but found this to be difficult, if not impossible, given what was referred to as the security situation in the area, and given that this is a very sensitive area for Hizballah, as quickly became clear. I then approached a cleric working with Fadlallah, told him about my intention to explore the relations between the Shiites of a southern village or town and the Lebanese state. Given that Fadlallah himself has put an emphasis on the fact that he considers Hizballah and himself to be part of the same Islamic milieu (*ḥāla' islāmiyya*), I asked him about the possibility of conducting my fieldwork with Fadlallah's organization instead. He immediately welcomed my request, and facilitated me with all the necessary contacts. I was then given the choice of conducting the fieldwork in either Khiam or Bint Jbeil. Mabarrat, as well as Fadlallah's religious organization, have a considerable presence in both towns but given that Bint Jbeil is much larger than Khiam, I choose Khiam as my example of a Shiite town in the south of Lebanon. All the conversations during the fieldwork were conducted in colloquial Arabic.

3.1.2 Limitations and obstacles

Doing fieldwork in the south of Lebanon poses a series of obstacles. The first is access to the area itself. Any foreigner who wishes to travel south of the Litani River has to obtain a special permit (*taṣrīḥ*) from the bureau of intelligence of the Lebanese Army in Sidon. How easy this

is can vary, but since I was accompanied by a Mabbarat employee who could vouch for me, and since I was not a journalist, it went quite easily.

A second problem which I encountered was the limitation of movement. I could not freely move around town on my own, again due to the ever-recurring security situation. On my second day in town, my main source took me aside and told me that he had felt obliged to inform the responsible for security in town, *al-mas'ul al-'amnī*, about my presence there. Ḥajj S., the Hizballah official, gave his approval of my presence there on the following two conditions: I could not walk around alone – someone from the Mabbarat office would have to accompany me when I wanted to venture outside the office, and I could not stay the night in the town.

These conditions of course limited my ability to talk to whoever I wanted, but on the other hand it had its advantages. My main source, an elderly man, was well-known and respected among the locals, and it seemed to me that no-one put any limitations on themselves when talking to me in his presence. This also protected me against potential accusations of being an Israeli spy – both before and after I did my fieldwork, there were endless reports about spies being apprehended, both foreign and local. Also, it gave me ample time to get to know the different people working with Fadlallah in Khiam and its surroundings. I would be taken along by the men in the office to meet representatives in surrounding villages and others they thought I should meet. During these trips we had some very interesting conversations, which in a special way helped me further understand how they viewed their situation.

Last but not least, being prevented from staying in Khiam at night, I had the opportunity to get to know its neighbouring village Ibl al-Saqi, a mixed Druze and Christian village a few kilometers away. This village had for several years housed NORBATT, the Norwegian forces of UNIFIL, which were first deployed here in 1978. Initially, those I met there found it difficult to believe that I was indeed a Norwegian – due to my Lebanese dialect they thought I was Beiruti – but on my second visit to one of the local bar-cum-restaurants, that changed. The owner introduced me to a man who had worked as a translator for the Norwegian contingent there, who had himself visited Norway. After this I was treated like an old friend, and would spend every evening chatting with the owners and patrons of the bar. This gave me a unique insight into how they, non-Shiite southerners, perceived the current situation, which has been very useful for me in the work on this thesis.

3.2 A redesigned thesis

Initially, I had wanted to limit this thesis to discovering who the Shiites in a southern town viewed as their providers of security, and how they related to the Lebanese state. However, when I returned to Norway and started to review this fieldwork, my findings led me to consider redesigning the thesis. This was not least due to some of the very blunt and surprising statements some of the people in Fadlallah's organization had given me as to their views on the Lebanese state. However, it was also due to the opposing views expressed by others in the same organization, albeit in a much more secretive manner. Compared to Hizballah's formal relinquishing of the goal of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon, the question of how to understand the party's policies came to the forefront. If the goal is no longer to take control of the state, what is it? At this stage, my supervisor also provided me with invaluable comments and suggestions, leading me to pose the question as to whether Hizballah exerts a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon.

It should be mentioned here that I had done some preparatory work for this thesis while on a visit to Lebanon in the summer of 2008, a very tense period for the country. I had then collected articles from a wide variety of newspapers, and thanks to the Palestine Studies Institute in Verdun I managed to obtain articles dealing with Hizballah and its development since the end of the civil war. Many of these had been used as sources by authors of the books on Hizballah whose analysis of the party I criticize in this thesis.

On that same visit I had met and interviewed some Lebanese intellectuals who had themselves studied the party, among them Wadah Sharara. I also discussed my project with a wide range of friends, who gave me a fantastic feedback and many also provided me with articles and sources that I was to use later.

3.2.1 From the local to the national

Having decided to redesign my thesis, and present the hypothesis that Hizballah is seeking to exercise a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon, I expanded my focus from Khiam to Shiite

Lebanon. By Shiite Lebanon I intend first and foremost the intellectual sphere where the different actors express their views, policies and power, not just the narrow confines of the geographical parts of Lebanon where the Shiites constitute a majority of the population. Would it be possible to observe the same trends on a national level as those I observed in Khiam?

3.3 The sources

3.3.1 The fieldwork

As mentioned above, it is the fieldwork I did in Khiam which is the main basis of this thesis. Through this fieldwork, adopting a qualitative research approach, this case study should be able to illuminate trends and policies on a national level as well.

One of the first concerns which confronted me was how to treat the people I met and talked with in the south, my sources. They range from shopkeepers and mechanics, their friends and other passers by, to the local staff at Fadlallah's two offices in the town, his representatives in surrounding villages and their families. I quickly opted for anonymizing all of these people, save for one, the *ra'īs al-baladiyya* who I had the opportunity to interview and who spoke as an official, not as a private person.

The main reason behind my decision to anonymize the remainder of people I met was they spoke to me as private persons, giving me their views and opinions on the situation in which they are living. Many would offer me views and opinions that surprised me, certainly going against the views expressed by officials, both party and religious. However, the same could be said about these officials as well. On some occasions I had to ask if I could cite them, as I was well aware that what they said was clearly contradicting the 'official line' of the organization or party to which they belonged. Even though they approved, I feel more comfortable with not exposing their identities, so as to protect them from being confronted by others with what they said to me. Then there were those who confidentially offered me views considered

controversial, and obviously in these cases I have chosen to actively make it difficult for anyone to identify them, by offering the merest amount of information about who they are.

It should be noted that I am aware that anonymity is not the same as confidentiality, i.e. while confidentiality indicates an attempt to completely remove any possibility of recognizing the subject, anonymity is just to keep the subject nameless.⁴¹ I attempt here to go beyond just leaving out the names of those I spoke with, although sometimes this is difficult. The number of employees in Fadlallah's organization in the town is limited, and with some knowledge of Khiam it would be possible to identify them. This does not pose a major problem as I see it, as I made it clear from the outset that I was researching an academic thesis, and that I would use the information they and others would provide me with for that purpose. They all approved of this; their main concern was to make sure that I was not a journalist of some kind.

None of these conversations were recorded. I brought a tape recorder with me, but both due to prior advice and my own judgment, I found that recording my conversations would probably lead those I spoke with to not speak as freely as they did. Instead I opted for taking notes and every evening I would write down all the day's events with as much detail as I could. (Actually, on one occasion when we were visiting a representative of Mabarrat in a village close to Khiam, one of the men from the office thought I took too few notes when talking to the representative's father, so he whispered in my ear that I should write more, as it would make me look more serious!)

3.3.2 Written sources

In addition to the observations I made during my fieldwork, I have employed a number of other sources to illuminate the policies of Hizballah in particular and the larger Shiite scene in general. The written sources I have used in this thesis are mainly used to underpin the findings of my fieldwork. As the views that these texts display are in most cases very clear, I have chosen this informal approach when reading them.⁴²

⁴¹ Berg 79.

⁴² Perällylä p.871.

As for the written sources I have used, there are other potential problems, although I feel confident that I have managed to steer away from most of these.

The main problem with some of these written sources is that they are biased on one side or the other, which in itself is not a problem as long as I remain aware of this. For instance, it is well known that the newspaper *al-Nahār* is firmly placed on one side of the political divide, with *al-Safīr* on the other, even though *al-Nahār* in particular has prominent writers who support the ‘other side’, so to speak. Other cases are more complicated. The magazine *al-Shira* ‘ is a good example of this. In the eighties, nineties, and into the 2000s the magazine was a staunch supporter of the Syrian regime and their presence in Lebanon but since the Syrian withdrawal in 2006 the magazine has adopted a vehemently anti-Syrian and anti-Hizballah stance. However, this does not disqualify *al-Shira* ‘ from being used as a source in certain instances. In the autumn of 2008, they ran a series of interviews with Fadlallah, some of which I have used. Still, I remember the reaction of one of the people working for Mabarrat when I told him about these interviews: ‘No Shia reads al-Shira ‘!’ It should be mentioned that the magazine is owned by a Shia.

3.3.3 Interviews

I made a few interviews for the thesis as well. Among them are two with Fadlallah himself, the first conducted at the end of my fieldwork in 2008 and the second in the summer of 2009. In connection with the first of these, I also had a long and very illuminating talk with ḥajj Hani Abdallah [Hānī ‘Abd Allāh], his closest personal adviser.

The other interviews I have used here are with Wadah Sharara and Saud al-Mawla [Sa‘ūd al-Mawlā], who are both critics of Hizballah and their policies. Sharara and al-Mawla are academics at the Department of Sociology at the Lebanese University. I have also used articles they have written, and the book on Hizballah by Sharara, *The State of Hizballah: Lebanon an Islamic Society (Dawlat Ḥizb Allāh: Lubnān Mujtama‘an ‘Islāmiyyan)*.

I have also used an interview I made with Yasir al-Manai [Yāsir al-Mana‘ī], who is the head of the Qatari office for the reconstruction of south Lebanon.

All these interviews were recorded. The ones with Fadlallah were also filmed and I was subsequently given a copy of them. The reason for recording these interviews was mainly that they were quite long, which meant that I would have had difficulties in reflecting over and comprehending the answers if I had to write down all the answers. I had requested beforehand if I could use a recorder, and the request was immediately approved.

Except for the interviews with Fadlallah, which were standardized interviews, the others would have to be described as semi-standardized.⁴³ That is to say, I had some topics I wanted to enquire about, but not a set of questions I asked. I tried to formulate my questions in a way that would make it easy for those I interviewed to focus on what *they* deemed important, and not on what might have been my own presuppositions of what was important.

The only interview I did in Khiam, with the *ra'īs al-baladiyya*, is the only one I did not record. I brought the recorder, but the atmosphere was so lively in the office that it did not seem appropriate.

3.3.4 Other sources

In addition, I have used speeches by Hasan Nasrallah and other leaders of the party as sources. Some of these I have on DVD, while on other occasions I have used transcripts of their speeches provided by party websites like those of *al-Manār* and *al-Intiqād*, the Hizballah TV station and weekly magazine respectively. I choose to use two one DVD as a source too: it is from a series on Lebanese political parties produced by the TV station NTV, known for its affiliation with Nabih Berri [Nabīh Birrī] and the Amal movement. It deals with the history of Amal, and provides insight into how this party itself perceives recent Lebanese history, and how they would like to present itself to the Lebanese public.

Last but not least, I have benefited enormously from endless discussions and talks with friends and acquaintances in Lebanon. They have provided me with other perspectives and views, and they have given me their perspective on Hizballah and its policies, and how these affect them in different ways.

⁴³ For more on this see Berg p.93-5.

3.4 Triangulation and Crystallization

This use of different methodological techniques to get a deeper understanding of a case is often referred to as ‘triangulation’. Ideally, by employing different research techniques and thereby looking at a case from different angles, the researcher should be able to get a more complex and holistic picture of the real situation, and also be able to verify his or her findings.⁴⁴ Others criticize the term triangulation and prefer this way of researching to be referred to as ‘crystallization’, the idea being that the researcher should look at the object from a multitude of angles, thus obtaining a ‘crystal’ with (a potential) multitude of shapes and substances, which can grow, change shape and be altered. This way of approaching the use of different methods in research, crystallization, is probably closer to describing what I have done in this thesis than triangulation, as the latter term would imply that there are three different techniques at work that will form a triangle, rather than a crystal.

3.5 Objectivity

A final note of great importance for this and any other thesis is the question of the researcher and his neutrality. In the same way the proponents of crystallization are eager to underline that there is no such thing as a single truth, I feel obliged to stress that there is no such thing as absolute neutrality. As a Norwegian, born and raised in a culture of egalitarianism, I am naturally coloured by this. Further, this thesis and the research preceding it is naturally influenced by the fact that I lived and studied in Lebanon for a period in the beginning of the nineties. Since then I visited the country regularly and I follow the political situation there on a daily basis, through my access to a variety of Lebanese and other Arab satellite channels, online newspapers and news websites, and through friends living there. Furthermore, this thesis could be seen as controversial, as I criticize an analysis of Hizballah that is common among scholars who have done research on the party.

While having my views on the political situation in Lebanon, I have done my utmost to make this thesis as well-founded as possible, through different considerations. First, during my fieldwork I made it clear to everyone I spoke to that I was there to get their views on their own situation. I did not engage in discussions about their views, nor did I give any impression

⁴⁴ Berg p.5.

as to my own inclinations, not in order to hide my views, but in order to obtain their views expressed freely, not as a defence or a justification. When conducting the fieldwork, I tried to be as open-minded and observant as possible. I did not have a pre-established idea of what results I would end up with. To my delight, I found many nuances, and also differing opinions, some of them unexpected, others conventional, and I have tried to include them all in the thesis.

These same considerations are valid for the written material as well. This material consists of books, documents, articles and speeches by both supporters and opponents of the party. The largest part of this is in Arabic. I have done what I could to be true to the opinions these represent, both through translation and presentation.

4 The Lebanese state

4.1 A contested entity

Following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the great powers of the time, France and England, became directly involved in shaping the future of the Middle East. France took control of what later became Syria and Lebanon, while Great Britain controlled Palestine and (Trans-)Jordan. They did this officially as Mandate powers on behalf of the League of Nations, with independence for these territories being the goal of their Mandate. The French formed the Republic of Lebanon in 1926, and in 1943 the country achieved its independence.⁴⁵

The Republic of Lebanon was from the outset a contested entity, with conflicting views on the very nature of this state. Some held the view that the whole idea of a separate Lebanese state was a mistake, that it was wrong to divide it from Syria. Others favoured independence, but disagreed about its nature – Arab or Lebanese. Many Maronites favoured an emphasis on Lebanese particularities, i.e. a Christian majority country with old and strong links with the West, separating it from the rest of the Middle East. Others, not least the Sunni community, favoured an emphasis on the Arab character of the new state.⁴⁶

The new Republic of Lebanon faced numerous challenges, not least concerning government and the distribution of power within it. The founders of the Republic adopted the so-called National Pact, *al-mithaq al-waṭanī*, as the power-sharing formula. One should bear in mind that these founding fathers (needless to say they were all men) did not represent a broad strata of Lebanese society. They were all members of the elite: landowners, bankers, merchants and so on.⁴⁷

This unwritten pact stipulated that the President of the Republic, along with the commander of the Army and the director of Public Security should be Maronites; the premiership became the preserve of the Sunnis, while the speaker of Parliament was allotted to the Shiites. The remainder of the seats in Parliament and the administrative positions was distributed among

⁴⁵ Salibi p.17.

⁴⁶ Salibi p.184-5.

⁴⁷ Tarboulsi p.94-5.

the 17 different religious sects that were officially recognized at the time, but at a ratio of 6:5 in Christian favour.⁴⁸ Giving a majority of positions to Christians has often been viewed as unfair and undemocratic, but when the National Pact was drawn up it seems that the main concern was to allay Christian fears of ending up as a minority among Muslims, as was the case with other Christians in the Middle East.

However, this power-sharing formula did not solve the fundamental questions concerning the identity of the state, for a number of reasons. Some of these were related to those who were chosen to represent the different sects, which was clearly the case for the Shiite communities and their representatives. According to the National Pact, the Shiites were considered to be the third largest of the sects and were allocated positions accordingly, with the foremost representative of the sect in the state institutions being the speaker of parliament. However, those representing the Shiites when the Pact was drawn up belonged more often than not to the old class of feudal landowners, known as *zu'amā'*, who put their own interests at the forefront, at the cost of the interests of the Shiites at large.⁴⁹

The developments in the region in the following decades further exacerbated these tensions within the state itself, reaching a peak in 1958 when the country for the first time was at the brink of a civil war, only prevented by an American military intervention. However, the problems were not solved, rather put under a lid, soon to emerge again, this time the difference being over which direction the Republic should take. By this time Nasser [Jamāl 'Abd al-Naṣīr] had firmly established his pan-Arab-oriented republic in Egypt, entered into a union with Syria and promoted himself as the undisputed leader of the Arab world. His message of Arab unity in the face of Western imperialism and Israel was welcomed by many in Lebanon as well, not least among the Sunnis. An additional question, that proved to become the main point of divergence, emerged after the Arab defeat in the war of 1967 – and it became acute following the events in Jordan three years later – it was what position should the Palestinian Liberation Organization have in Lebanon?

In 1969 the Lebanese government, under heavy pressure from other Arab regimes, signed an agreement brokered by Nasser. It allowed the Palestinians to conduct military operations

⁴⁸ Salibi p.186, Tarboulsi p.110.

⁴⁹ Shanahan p.31-2.

against Israel from Lebanese soil, and in addition it gave the Palestinians full control of the Palestinian refugee camps shattered across the country.⁵⁰

These were challenges to the authority of the state, including the fundamental principle of it being the sole provider of armed forces such as the police and the army.

4.2 The civil war and its impact

The outcome of challenging the state's authority in this way culminated in 1975 with the outbreak of a civil war that lasted for fifteen years, and the almost complete collapse of the Lebanese state.

During the war, one of the most significant developments was that the Syrians established themselves as the main power-broker in the country. They entered Lebanon in 1976 as a peacekeeping force invited by the then President Sarkis [Sarkīs] and sanctioned by the Arab League,⁵¹ and in the course of the next fifteen years they managed to expand their presence in the military and political arenas to the extent that any agreement between the Lebanese or between Lebanon and other countries became impossible without obtaining an approval from the Syrians.⁵² The war ended with a Saudi-sponsored and Syrian-supported agreement known as the Taif Agreement, named after the Saudi town where the politicians and warlords met and decided the future of the country. Most noteworthy in the agreement was the change in the power-balance between the Christians and the Muslims, which was altered from a 5:6 ratio in favour of the Christians to a 5:5 ratio, and in the equation of power between the President, the Speaker of Parliament and the Prime Minister.⁵³

However, the end of the war did not produce a strong and independent state, and many of the fundamental differences remained unsolved. The result was a state where another state, Syria, had the final say in all affairs of any importance and the headquarters of the Syrian Intelligence in Anjar became more important than the Lebanese parliament, and it was frequented by most of the elected politicians.

⁵⁰ Traboulsi p.154.

⁵¹ Ibid. p.201.

⁵² Ibid. p.245-6.

⁵³ Cleveland p.380 Traboulsi 244-5.

Another point not to be missed about the post-war Lebanese system is that the armed wing of Hizballah, the Islamic Resistance (*al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya*), was allowed to keep its weapons, as it was now defined as a national resistance army that fought the Israeli occupation in the south on behalf of the Lebanese state. Other parties and the militias had been disarmed as a part of the Taif-agreement, but Hizballah insisted it was not a militia and with Iranian backing and Syrian consent obtained this unique position.

4.3 Sectarianism

Lebanon thus has a political system where representation is based on sectarian religious affiliation. The concept of sectarianism is a complex one, and indeed a contested one as well, and a concept many have blamed for being at the core of Lebanon's problems.⁵⁴ Therefore, a closer look at this concept is inevitable if one wishes to understand Lebanese politics and society. For this it is necessary to look at its origins, in the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire came to be perceived by Sunni Muslims from inside and outside of it as the leading Sunni Muslim authority in the world, the Caliphate, with the reigning Emperor as the Caliph, the embodiment of Sunni orthodoxy. Other religions in the Empire were organized through what was known as the Millet system. This meant that groups were organized on the basis of which Millet, that is, confessional community, they belonged to, not grouped by ethnicity or language. Each confessional community had its own courts so it could rule itself under its own 'personal law'. Each Millet was usually led by the head of each confessional community, so for example the Greek Orthodox Millet was headed by the Patriarch, who in turn had a very close relationship with the Emperor. In this respect, it is of utmost importance to note that other Muslim confessions, like Shiites, Druze, Alawis and so on, were not treated as separate Millets, but were subject to Sunni jurisprudence.

At the outset of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire began to show serious signs of weakness, for a number of reasons. Foreign powers began to make their presence felt and the Empire began to disintegrate. Egypt had been briefly occupied by France, and was 'liberated' by a joint Ottoman-British force, but quickly became a sovereign province. Greece became independent in the 1820s, and was recognized as such by the Emperor in 1829.

⁵⁴ For instance Fadlallah, interview October 2008.

In trying to curb these developments and also in order to modernize the ineffective administration of the Empire, what became known as the Tanzimat was launched in 1839. These were a series of unprecedented reforms, but for this purpose one reform stands out, the dismantling of the Millet system. From then on, every subject of the Ottoman Empire was to be treated as an equal, or so it was understood by some.⁵⁵

Mount Lebanon, the core of what later became the Republic of Lebanon, was a multi-religious region, with Maronites and Druze forming the two main components, at times ruled by the Sunni Shihābī family, at others by a Druze *Qā'im Maqām*. Following the announcement of the Tanzimat, some Maronite laymen took them to mean that all men were now equals under the Sublime Porte, something which clearly was not the intent of the Ottomans. Theirs was a project of modernization on several levels, but it seems that at no point did they intend to change the social order of Mount Lebanon.⁵⁶ The Maronite revolt that eventually broke out was also a revolt against fellow Maronites who rejected to give 'commoners' a say in the affairs of the community. It ended with thousands of Maronites being massacred by their Druze neighbours in 1860, and crucially with an increased foreign presence in Mount Lebanon.

This presence had made itself felt even before the events of 1860, but now this development accelerated. Not only France but also Britain was active, each portraying themselves as being the protector of one of the 'nations' inhabiting the mountains. This is of crucial importance, as this way of defining people on the basis of their religious belonging, as different 'tribes', was new.⁵⁷ France used the massacres of 1860 to strengthen its presence in Lebanon as protectors of the Christians and actively pressured the Empire to grant Mount Lebanon an increased level of autonomy.

4.4 The parliamentary system

The legacy of these events was felt from then to the inception of the Republic of Lebanon and continues on today in the form of a parliamentary system based on sectarian representation.

⁵⁵ Makdisi p.105.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.23-5.

Steps were taken from the very beginning of the Republic of Lebanon to counter negative aspects of this system and to promote intra-communal political integration. The country was divided into administrative units and electoral constituencies which were multi-confessional, thus promoting political cooperation and interaction. The constituencies were, and continue to be, multi-member, so the electorate votes not only for candidates of the same sect as they themselves belong to, but for candidates of other sects as well. If we take the example of the *qaḍā'* administrative and electoral district of Marjayoun/Hasbaya to which Khiam belongs, we find that this district is allotted five MPs: two Shiites, one Druze, one Greek Orthodox and one Sunni.⁵⁸ A voter in this district, irrespective of his or her own sectarian belonging, is voting for a list of five candidates, with the abovementioned sectarian balance. For instance, a Maronite will not be allowed to run in the elections in this district, although he will of course have the right to vote. The voter can usually choose among several candidates, but this district, along with most other districts in south Lebanon, will find that the main actors here, i.e. Hizballah in cooperation with Amal and other allies, have settled the elections before they take place. The list endorsed by them will be the one to win, even though in some cases there will be opposing candidates.

One of the main reasons for this is another particular feature of the Lebanese system. Voters are registered in the village or town from where their family originates, and are only allowed to vote there. With the displacement following the civil war and demographic changes, i.e. as more non-Shiites moved from the area, this means that a district such as Marjayoun/Hasbaya has a clear majority of Shiite voters. In some instances this does not seem to be the case when one looks at the registered voters in a given district, but the actual voter turnout shows that this pattern is valid. If we take the example of Baabda, to which the southern suburbs of Beirut belong, this is evident. Here there were registered 48,180 Maronite voters, of whom 27,359 turned out, giving a percentage of 56.78%. In the same district the number of registered Shiite votes is 34,524, of whom 21,239 turned out to vote, giving a percentage of 61.52%. This district – on paper – has a clear majority of Maronite voters, just under 14,000 more Maronite voters than Shiite, while the actual turnout shows that the difference here is only just under 6,000 voters in favour of the Maronites.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ See www.elections.gov.lb

⁵⁹ Al-Nahār 23.June 2009 p.5.

Needless to say, the electoral system is also constantly debated, not least the size of the electoral constituencies, but for the last two elections, in 2005 and 2009 respectively, the same system based on the *qaḍā'* model has been observed.

4.5 The Lebanese Shiites

A brief glance at the Shiites of Lebanon and their history is necessary. This is not one single community, as one could be led to believe, but rather it consists of several communities each with its own characteristics and history. That the Shiites of Lebanon today are treated as one single community, not least thanks to the efforts of Hizballah in promoting this unified picture, does not change this. The most prominent of these areas is Jabal Amil situated in the south of the country, bordering Palestine and Syria. This used to be a well-known centre of Shiite learning, long before the rise of Najaf, Qom and other centres, and this fact is even today a source of great pride for Lebanese Shiites.⁶⁰ Learning was not centred around great mosques, as is the case with other centres of learning, rather it took place in the modest houses of the *'ulamā'* who lived and taught there. When the Shiite school became the official religion in Persia with the founding of the Safavid Empire in 1700, they brought a significant number of scholars from Jabal Amil to serve the Empire.

The area was and still is mainly an agrarian one, with tobacco being the most common crop. Today the area has developed in much the same way as other areas in Lebanon, with a large percentage of the population working and living in other places, both on the outskirts of Sidon and Beirut, but also outside Lebanon. The Gulf states have for a long time been the preferred destination. My sources in Khiam all agreed that Kuwait was the most important place for Khiam's diaspora, only the *ra'īs al-baladiyya* claimed that the Emirates had take the position Kuwait used to occupy.

The other main concentration of Shiites is found in the Bekaa, especially in the areas of Baalbek – Hirmil, but unlike the situation in the south, these societies are clan-based. While in the south one could talk about noble families, in these districts clan solidarity takes superiority. Traditionally mainly pastoral, there is also some agriculture here, especially south

⁶⁰ As was pointed out to me again and again during my fieldwork.

of Baalbek, but today the Hirmil is probably better known for its production of hashish than anything else.

Due to its proximity to Syria, this area was of vital importance for the establishing of Hizballah, as will be dealt with later in this thesis.

The third main concentration of Shiites in Lebanon is in *al-Ḍāḥiyya*, the southern suburbs of Beirut. It is here the leadership of Hizballah lives and work. Fadlallah with his institutions is based here, along with other Shiite institutions such as the Higher Council. As mentioned above, these parts of Beirut actually belong to the district of Baʿabda and are separate municipalities. What is now referred to as *al-Ḍāḥiyya* is actually a collection of small villages that used to be outside Beirut but has merged together with the city in the course of the last half century or so. This is also where the Palestinian refugee camps in the capital are situated, the Burj al-Barājna camp being the largest. Most of these villages had a Christian majority before the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 but at the very beginning of it, this started to change. Some of the areas had a Shiite majority even before the war, such as Shiyya, while others like Burj al-Barajneh had a considerable Shiite minority. When the war broke out, Christians started to flee the area as Palestinian guerrillas and their Lebanese allies took control, while Shiites went the opposite direction, from al-Nabaʿa and other places in the eastern part of Beirut towards *al-Ḍāḥiyya*. Today the area is almost exclusively Shiite, save for the Palestinian camps.

4.6 The religious hierarchy and the position of the clerics.

Some words about the religious organization of the Shiites, in Lebanon and other places, are necessary in order for us to understand the importance and position of clerics among the Shiites. Without dwelling on the development of Shiism as such, one aspect is of great importance: that is, who holds the right to rule.

The twelve Imams who according to the Shiites followed Muhammad as leaders of the *ʿumma*, the Muslim nation, held extraordinary powers. They inherited the prerogatives of Muhammad, and although they are not considered to be prophets, they are considered as

being free from sin and error.⁶¹ As long as there was an Imam present, the question of who should lead the 'umma was not debated. The twelfth and last of these Imams, Muḥammad al-Muntaẓar or al-Mahdī, represents a key to our understanding of Shiism. According to the Shiite doctrine, he went into occultation, *ghayba*, and will only reappear on the day of judgement. This left a void still debated to this day, as the question arose: who can now lead the nation? A majority held the view that in the absence of the Imam, no government or ruler could be considered legitimate. That is not to say that they would resist the rulers of their societies, but at the same time they would not bestow upon them legitimacy, as this would be to equate them with the awaited Imam.

The opposite of this position started to develop some time after the last Imam went into occultation, although it was only after the Safavid dynasty was established in Persia that its development gathered pace. This view gave the '*ulamā*' a central position, as they were now considered to be the general representative (*al-nā'ib al-āmm*) of the hidden Imam. It became obligatory for the believers to pay religious taxes to the '*ulamā*',⁶² a fact that over time gave them a strong and somehow independent position vis-a-vis the state. This trend developed further until it reached a point where such Shiite scholars as Muhammad al Shirāzī advocated that the state should be ruled by the 'just jurist' (*al-faqīh al-ādil*).⁶³ The most well-known of these scholars is Khomeini, who together with Montazeri formulated the theory of the rule of the jurist (*wilāyat al-faqīh*), the general representative of the hidden Imam on earth. Although this trend of clerical involvement in politics had started many decades before, this theory placed them on top of the political hierarchy. Without their involvement no rule could be considered just.

In Lebanon, the impact of the clerics on the Shiites is also clearly visible, from Musa al-Sadr [Mūsā al-Ṣadr], who was the one who instigated the involvement of the Shiites, as Shiites, in politics, to Fadlallah, who in the nineties reached the highest position in the Shiite religious hierarchy, that of *marji 'al-taqlīd*, often translated as 'source of emulation'.

Shiites, and indeed also many Sunnis, give a prominent role to clerics, as they have the knowledge to understand and explain the sources of religious legislation, the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, his sayings and for the Shiites also the writings and

⁶¹ Momen p. 155.

⁶² Ibid. p.190.

⁶³ Al-Kātib p.68.

statements of the twelve Imams. However, unlike the Sunnis, the Shiites have a clearer defined religious hierarchy, on the bottom of which is the *mujtahid*. This is a person who, after studying at one of the religious seminaries, obtains an *'ijāza* from a senior cleric under whom he has studied. This makes him able to issue *fatāwā*, religious rulings, based on the sources mentioned above and commonly in accordance with the rulings of the teacher who gave him the *'ijāza*.⁶⁴ In recent times, and especially after the revolution in Iran which brought Khomeini to power, the term *'āyat Allāh*, sign of God, is used for an established *mujtahid*, with the added *'uẓmā*, 'Grand', indicating that this is one of the few senior clerics who is also a 'source of emulation', which has become a separate institution.

All believing Shiites are supposed to choose their 'source of emulation', on a free, individual basis, and to follow his rulings and directions in *all questions* related to belief. This includes everything from the position taken when performing the prayers, the start and end of Ramadan, questions of inheritance and political leadership and positions (given that the *marji* ' in question advocates these). Therefore a believer who has chosen to follow a particular *marji* ' *al-taqlīd* is also referred to as a *muqallid*, emulator, of this or that *marji* '.

4.7 Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah

Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah was born in Iraq in 1935, some eight years after his parents emigrated to Najaf from the south of Lebanon in order for his father to pursue religious studies there. He received his first religious training from his father, together with two of his brothers, and later continued his studies with others from the respected and renowned *'ulamā* ' residing there.

Najaf was at that point the undisputed centre of Shiite learning, and all the leading *marāji* 'a were based there. It is also worth bearing in mind that this was the time when many of the younger generation of *'ulamā* ' started to engage in politics, and the Fadlallah was one of these. One of the most famous of these *'ulamā* ' was Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, who is perhaps most known as one of the funders of the *Ḥizb al-Da 'wa al- 'Islāmiyya*. This party is significant in several respects: it was the first ever Shiite political party, and although it was formed by laymen, it gave the *'ulamā* ' a leading political role. This went against the line

⁶⁴ Momen p.202.

followed by the *marāji* ' of the time, like that of Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm and 'Abd al-Qāsim al-Khū'ī, who advocated that the '*ulamā*' should stay out of politics.

These were the formative years in the long career of Fadlallah, and are important in order to understand his later political stances. Fadlallah settled permanently in Lebanon in the mid-sixties upon an invitation from a group of believers centred in the Nabaa area of Beirut. They dispatched an envoy to the *marji* ' al-Khū'ī to ask for an '*ālim* to come to Lebanon and guide them, and al-Khū'ī 'honoured us by sending the Sayyid'.⁶⁵ Despite of different views on politics and the participation of '*ulamā*' in it, this did not hinder al-Khū'ī from appointing Fadlallah as his personal representative in Lebanon, which he remained until the death of al-Kho'i in 1990.

One of the first achievements of Fadlallah was to set up an institute for religious studies, and thus starting what is now referred to as his *ḥawza*, religious seminary. Initially it seems he devoted his time more to studies and social work than engaging in politics. This is probably due to the fact that fellow cleric Musa al-Sadr at this time became one of the leading Shiite social and political leaders of these communities. However, following the latter's disappearance in 1978 and the subsequent revolution in Iran, Fadlallah emerged as one of the staunchest supporters of the revolution, and an important Shiite leader. While he denies, as do his followers, that he had any role in the establishment of Hizballah, there is no doubt that he was very close to them, and was regularly consulted and asked for advice.

Following the death of al Khū'ī, Fadlallah chose to follow 'Ali Sistānī (who is still the most influential *marji* ' in the world) until he himself became a *marji* ' in 1995⁶⁶.

His views, and the relationship between him and Hizballah, will be dealt with in subsequent chapters, but as will be evident, much of the material in this thesis is obtained from him and his followers, not least from my fieldwork. Fadlallah died in June 2010, following a period of illness.

⁶⁵ As one member of this group put it during a conversation with me in October 2008.

⁶⁶ Sankari p. 256.

5 A Shiite town in south Lebanon

5.1 A local community and the question of hegemony

How can I defend the argument that Hizballah is seeking to exert a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon? In 2.6 I wrote that the concept of hegemony I use consists of several fields, the economic, the state and civil society. As will be evident from what I wrote earlier, there are certain conditions which have to be in place in order for us to talk about a hegemony. Does the population accept the role of the Islamic Resistance as the defender of their land and the providers of security for them in their daily lives? As for the civil society, an important factor to clarify is what kind of organizations operate on the ground and their role in this society at large. Another question of great importance is that of representation, whom does the population see as representing them politically? How are other political forces viewed and treated? The very same questions can be asked about religion, to whom does the population refer in religious questions and how are other religious authorities viewed? And who has the economic means to provide services to the population?

5.2 Khiam

The town of Khiam is situated in the middle of Jabal Amil, on a hilltop just south of Marjayoun, which is the regional centre and the biggest town in the area, and capital of the Marjayoun *qaḍā'* to which Khiam belongs. This *qaḍā'* is again part of the *muḥāfaẓa* of Nabatieh. The number of inhabitants is difficult to assess, the main reason being the large number who do not live in Khiam permanently. My sources and others I spoke to claimed the number of permanent residents to be around seven thousand, swelling to around fifteen in the weekends and holidays. However, the number of voters registered here is much larger and the official number of residents is around thirty thousand.⁶⁷

When asked where the remainder of the population lived, various people immediately mentioned Kuwait. One even claimed that several thousand from Khiam lived there. The *ra'īs al-baladiyya* told me that while Kuwait had been the preferred destination of emigration for

⁶⁷ www.khiam.com writes that the number of residents is around thirty thousand, with an electorate of around 15 000.

years, he now believed the Emirates to be the main destination. In addition to emigration, a large number live and work in other parts of Lebanon, mainly in Beirut, but many also in Nabatieh, Tyre and Sidon, which are in the southern parts of the country.

There had been emigration earlier, but it became significant when by the beginning of the seventies, large numbers had emigrated from the south (including Khiam), to Beirut and abroad. There were several factors causing this, not least difficulties in the agricultural sector, which played a very prominent role.⁶⁸ This coincided with the increased activities of Palestinian guerrilla organizations, who following the so-called Cairo agreement of 1969 were allowed to operate from Lebanon. When Israel retaliated, it was more often than not the civilian population of the south who had to face the consequences. The feeling of disenfranchisement was increased by the fact that the PLO became a state-within-the-state in these areas, particularly so after the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. Large sections of the population came to feel a strong resentment against Palestinians, even among religious Shiites who supported their cause. As an older man, a *muqallid* of Fadlallah who I spoke to in a neighbouring village said, ‘You just don’t behave like that when you are a guest of someone, *mā biṣīr*, what would you have done if you had invited some guests just to find that they had taken over your house and treated you as a stranger?’. It should be noted that this is just one part of the picture: many young Shiites joined Palestinian groups and fought for them as well.⁶⁹

While the civil war ended in 1990, Israel continued to occupy southern Lebanon through its proxy, the South Lebanese Army. Those who remained in Khiam and the south during these years had few options when it came to making a living. Many worked in Israel or enrolled in the SLA to make a living, while others took advantage of the presence of UNIFIL forces and worked with them, either by being employed directly or by setting up cafes, bars or other outlets aimed at the foreign soldiers.⁷⁰

5.3 UNIFIL

⁶⁸ Traboulsi 158-62.

⁶⁹ Conversation with Saud al-Mawla, Jan.2009, himself an old member of Fatah.

⁷⁰ I had the chance to talk with many people, both in Khiam and Ibl al-Saqi, about these times. They all complained that the situation as for work opportunities had not improved after 2000, with some, although not in Khiam, claiming that they were better off during the Israeli occupation.

UNIFIL was set up following the Israeli invasion in 1978 by United Nations Security Council resolutions 425 and 426. As the name implies (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon), it was meant to be a temporary force, with a mandate to monitor the Israeli withdrawal and help the Lebanese government to restore its authority over the area. As the Israelis did not withdraw, UNIFIL continued its presence, putting an emphasis on providing humanitarian aid to the inhabitants left there, and to try to protect them from Israeli raids. From 1982 on, an important task was also to monitor the developments between the Israelis and the increasingly active Islamic Resistance. Following the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from most of the occupied south Lebanon in 2000, a new situation emerged. The Lebanese state did not consider the withdrawal to be complete, so it refused to let the Lebanese Army resume its responsibilities in the south. It could not be seen to 'police' the south and thereby become involved directly in the armed conflict that continued between Hizballah and the Israelis. This new situation meant that Hizballah and its Islamic Resistance was now the sole armed presence in this part of the country, and in the years from 2000 to 2006 the party exploited its new position to strengthen its military power and influence, which became evident in the July 2006 war.

Relations between UNIFIL and locals have been generally good, but from the beginning of 2010, reaching a peak in June, there have been several clashes between UNIFIL forces and locals. While Hizballah has not commented on these events, a UNIFIL official linked this to the implementation of UN resolution 1701,⁷¹ which brought an end to the war in July 2006.⁷²

5.4 The July 2006 war

On 12 July 2006, soldiers from the Islamic Resistance crossed the Blue Line and abducted two Israeli soldiers and killed three others.⁷³ The purpose was to use these abducted soldiers as bargaining chips in a prisoner-exchange with the Israelis, something the party had successfully done before. However, this time the operation led Israel to launch a full-scale war on Lebanon, damaging much of its infrastructure, not least in the south. During the war between Hizballah and Israel, Khiam was among the towns in the south that saw immense

⁷¹ For the full text of this resolution see: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/465/03/PDF/N0646503.pdf?OpenElement>

⁷² Now Lebanon 30.06.2010.

⁷³ Sharāra p.390/443.

destruction, being situated close to the border itself, with the Islamic Resistance using it as a launching area for its rockets. My contacts and the *ra'īs al-baladiyya* told me that as many as 70% of all houses in the town were completely destroyed, and that the majority of its citizens fled northwards for safety.⁷⁴

Based on what my sources and contacts told to me, the war came as both a surprise and a shock to most of them. Just six years after many of them came back to the town and re-established themselves there, the experience of having to flee for their lives once again led many to consider solutions to the conflict with Israel other than those officially promoted by the Islamic Resistance.

The hostilities ended with the adoption of UN resolution 1701, forcing Hizballah to move its armed presence to the north of the Litani River, and it paved the way for the Lebanese Army to enter the south for the first time since 1978, in cooperation and coordination with a strengthened and expanded UNIFIL force.

Most significant for my study is the exposure of the power structures in the south and indeed in the rest of Lebanon, that followed in the wake of the war, and the crisis this resulted in. It became clear that it was not the Lebanese state that was in charge of such an important decision as whether to launch a war or not. In fact, the country witnessed a war launched by their neighbouring state on a non-state actor in their country. The formidable military strength of Hizballah was also exposed, frightening many of their adversaries, who feared that this would eventually be used against *them*, despite assurances from Hizballah that their weapons were only to be used against the Israelis. As we shall see, it also had a profound effect on the party's own power base in the south, which consisted of the people who suffered the most from the results of the war.

5.5 'We don't have a state, we have parties'

The overwhelming response I got to my question of how people perceived the presence of the state in Khiam was 'We don't have a state here!' or 'There is no state here'. These responses were unanimous, and came directly and without any hesitation on part of the responders. In

⁷⁴ These numbers were echoed by Yāsir al-Mana'ī, head of the Qatari programme of rehabilitation of south Lebanon, who I interviewed in January 2009.

most cases, an illuminating phrase would also be added: ‘We have parties [here]’ (‘*andnā ’ahzāb*’). This was in most instances presented as a regrettable fact, as the expression ‘*lil-’asaf*’ or ‘*ma’ al-’asaf*’ would be added. Some of the responses would express it with more resignation than others, and some would be expressed with more defiance. Not surprisingly, those who did not add the phrase ‘We have parties’, declared sympathy towards a party, and in all but a couple of instances this was towards Hizballah and the resistance.

However, it is interesting to note the near identical responses from the different people I interviewed, both the fact that the state was perceived to be largely absent, and the fact that most people I spoke with perceived the parties to act *as* a state, or in some form having taken the place of the state.

In the course of my conversations, a more nuanced picture of the situation emerged, and even though the grievances were the same, it became clear that the state in fact was present on some levels. A man I spoke to turned out to be a state employee (*muwazzaf al-dawla*) even though he had initially expressed that he considered the state to be by and large absent from Khiam and the rest of the south. I also met the principal at the local government school in Khiam, and although he had a similar perception to the majority, he admitted that the state at least tried to fulfil some of its obligations, for instance in education.

Others would also point out that some relief and funds came from the state, but in these cases this would be linked to one politician, Nabih Berri [Nabīh Birrī], due to his position in the government-run ‘Council of the South’ (*majlis al-janūb*).

A phrase that is interesting in the context of this thesis is ‘*andnā ’ahzāb*’, as this implies that there is not a situation where one party is solely in control, or that one party alone has taken over the functions of the state. In this respect, another observation is of great importance, namely which parties are present, and where they are present. In Khiam, and surrounding villages with a Shiite majority, I found no open presence in the form of banners, posters or other signs of parties linked to the March 14 grouping. ‘These people have no support here, that's why they are not present, no-one supports them’ – this is how one of my contacts explained the situation, and he went on to say unequivocally, ‘Hariri doesn’t have any support in the south, even his hometown is ruled by the opposition!’

Besides the massive presence of Hizballah, through posters, flags, relief organizations and their collection boxes placed in stores and supermarkets, the other most visible party was

Amal. Their traditional stronghold is in the south and although their presence did not seem to be as massive as that of Hizballah, they seemed to have a substantial following as well. Pictures and flags of their Christian allies in the Free Patriotic Movement and the Marada could also be found, along with some scattered flags from the Communist Party. Remarkably, I observed little presence of the Syrian Social National Party, whose current leader is from Marjayoun and was elected an MP on the coalition list of March 8.

In mixed villages or places without a Shiite majority, the picture seemed to be different. When driving from Marjayoun to Ibl on my first day there, I immediately noticed an enormous portrait of late Premier Hariri covering the whole side of a house along the way. Although there was a visible presence of other parties, the general impression was that the presence was more low-key in these areas, for all parties.

Based on the above observations, it seems fair to say that the vast majority of the population in Khiam view the Lebanese state as being largely absent from their lives and that it is unable or unwilling to provide them with the security they need, be it social or military. It is also fair to say, based on my observations, that for a majority this is a regrettable fact. Most of those I spoke with would tell me directly that they wanted the state to take up its responsibilities. In other words, the absence of the state is viewed as a problem.

5.6 The neglected periphery

When I asked the people I talked to about the reasons for what they perceived to be the absence of the state, almost unanimously the explanation they offered me was a variation on ‘It is always like this, all over the world! The south is always neglected, look at South America or the southern parts of Africa and Europe, it's the same. The south is always neglected, I'm sure it's like this in south Norway as well!’ – so said one man I had a long conversation with outside his workshop. Different varieties of this answer were offered by everyone I asked, not necessarily with a focus on the south, but on the fact that they were on the periphery of the country. Many would also point out that the south is not the only part of Lebanon that is less developed, and mentioned Akkar as another example. Some would also mention the Bekaa in this respect.

This answer is interesting on many levels, first because it does not link the absence of the state in their areas to any political trend. In fact, people were eager to make clear that this was not a new situation. Although the criticism of the current government in general, and Hariri in particular, was harsh, they would also criticize former governments for neglect.

It is of interest on another level as well, as it does not link the perceived absence to the fact that they are Shiites, and the traditional image that the Shiites and the parts of the country with a Shiite majority are the most underdeveloped and neglected. The area they compared themselves to, Akkar, has a clear majority of Sunnis and is located in the extreme north of the country.

Although seeming rather fatalistic, the answer that it has always been like this should not, however, be taken as an acceptance of the status quo. All the responses came with a clear opinion that it should not continue like this forever, and that now was the time to bridge the differences between the towns, or rather between Beirut and the underdeveloped parts of the country.

5.7 The view from *ra'īs al-baladiyya*

The *ra'īs al-baladiyya*, 'Alī Zarīq, is the representative for a large section of the inhabitants of the town. He lives and works in Beirut and only comes to Khiam in the weekends. This means that when he is present, there are long lines of people wanting to see him for all kinds of reasons. It could be a permission of some kind, dispute over land, or building projects and so on.

When I came to the *baladiyya* on an early Saturday morning, the place was already bustling with life, and his secretary asked me to wait for some minutes. She was a young woman, not veiled, and dressed like any other Lebanese of her age. With her tight-fitting jeans she was quite a contrast to the local village police, with their beards and loose-fitting green uniforms. 'Don't be afraid, it's just the village police,' my companion said as we waited for our turn.

In common with my other sources, the *ra'īs al-baladiyya* was very frustrated about the current state of affairs and the absence of the state. As leader of the *baladiyya* he saw his role as representing Khiam vis-à-vis the state and to secure services and welfare for the citizens.

He claimed that there were no politics on part of the state to care for other parts of the country outside Beirut, and his response is thus very much in line with most others who also pointed at the geographical reason for the absence. He said that people were mainly employed in agriculture and small-scale industry, but pointing at the lack of work opportunities he voiced his concern that the state had done nothing to create jobs and thereby contribute to a stable situation in the south: 'Without the remittances sent from fellow villagers in the Gulf, the situation would have been very hard here.' He also mentioning increased economic activity during summer as a result of all the people returning from abroad to spend their money locally. Here he saw another problem: there is no bank in Khiam and people would have to go to Majayoun if they needed this kind of services.

Of the many things lacking in the town, the most pressing, as he saw it, was a hospital. He considered the hospital in Marjayoun to be of poor quality and said that any serious illness or injury would require the patient to go to Nabatieh or Sidon for treatment. It sounded as if they were trying to convince the authorities to build a hospital there, but ran into what he described as a major problem, that is the system itself. 'This system is not sound, *sālim*, it's all sectarian, *tā'ifī*, and not working for the interests of the people. When we want something from the authorities we find ourselves in a situation where we have to do like the other parties, even if we don't like it. Someone knows someone who can get things fixed, and we have to play along with this in order to get anything done. Unfortunately, *lil-'assaf*.'

Also in common with everyone else I met he was quick to praise Qatar for their contribution to the reconstruction of Khiam following the July War of 2006, claiming that 90% of the funding was from the Gulf state alone. Iran had take upon itself to repair all the roads damaged in the war, also a considerable task given the level of destruction.

5.8 Who is viewed to be the '*sulṭa*'?

5.8.1 Politically

In the absence of the state, who is then perceived to be the authority? Clearly, on a local level there is the *majlis al-baladiyya*, or just *al-baladiyya*, the town council. This organ is elected locally, and is supposed to deal with local politics and to represent the town vis-à-vis the state

and its institutions. In Khiam, the inhabitants all seemed to have some kind of relations with this local organ, but herein lies a problem as well: as the problems stemming from state absence is far bigger than those that the *baladiyya* can deal with, no-one expects them to be able to solve any of these, whether related to education, health or other areas.

Concerning the political representation of Khiam on a national level, there was a common agreement among those I spoke to that given the size of the town it should have an MP. For several periods they have been represented by Ali Hassan Khalil [‘Alī Ḥasan Khalīl], who is from Khiam and member of Amal, and is considered the right-hand man of Amal leader Nabih Berri. Khalil is also seen as being close to Hizballah, and on many occasions he has been the one representing Berri, like on the marking of Martyrs Day (*yawm al-shuhadā’*), when the party holds large gatherings with speeches by the Secretary-General or his Deputy.⁷⁵ Some of my contacts voiced their reservations about Khalil, claiming that he is too much like all other politicians. At one point in a conversation, a man complained about the upcoming election campaign and said that rumours were that Khalil had already started to hand out money to secure his re-election. Accusations like these are of course impossible to verify, but I find it worth mentioning, as it shows that even among people who consider themselves as being close to the political trend Khalil represents, and who vote for him, there is a conviction that politicians like him engage in the same manoeuvring that the opposing camp is accused of employing.

5.8.2 Security and ‘*al-waḍ’ al-’amnī*’

The so-called security situation, *al-waḍ’ al-’amnī*, is an ever-present concept covering many aspects of the general situation in Khiam and the south. I discovered quickly what the implications of this concept were: the party, through its resistance, was in complete control militarily over Khiam. On one of my first days in the town, I was told that due to *al-waḍ’ al-’amnī*, they had informed *al-ma’sūl al-’amnī*, the security responsible, about my presence there. This man, Ḥajj S., was from the party, and again, due to *al-waḍ’ al-’amnī*, severe limitations were put on my ability to work freely in the town. I could not leave the offices of Mabbarat without being accompanied by one of the staff, nor could I spend nights there. They were, however, happy to have me there as long as I complied with these rules, and should

⁷⁵ Like on November 11, 2008 Martyr’s Day in Mujama’ al-Shuhadā’ where I was present.

anyone stop me or mention anything about my presence, I was told to just tell them that I had the permission of Ḥajj S.

This situation seemed to be dealt with as a matter of fact, and no-one I met questioned the fact that Hizballah were the ones responsible for dealing with the security of the inhabitants. It is of course impossible to appraise this situation without taking into consideration the events witnessed by the town in the recent years, not least the July 2006 war between the Israelis and Hizballah and its repercussions.

One significant aspect is the threat of renewed hostilities. Even though there were no signs that a new conflict was imminent, the party themselves and many of the people I spoke to saw themselves locked in an eternal struggle which would last as long as there existed an Israeli state, and so they were in a state of more or less constant alert. Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace with both drones and warplanes breaking the sound barrier over the town, adding to the feeling of being under threat.

Another factor complicating the matter was the increasing number of Israeli spies and spy networks that were uncovered, both at the time I was there and later on. As far as I am aware, few if any of those apprehended and accused of spying have yet been convicted of doing so, but it would not be surprising if many of them were actually guilty, given the fact that several others have managed to flee to Israel, and given the state of war the two sides find themselves in. Several of the detainees are from Khiam and surrounding towns and villages.

UNIFIL forces do not have a base in Khiam itself, as they do in neighbouring towns and villages, and although no-one had many negative things to say about them, UNIFIL seemed rather irrelevant when talking about *al-waḍʿ al-ʿamnī*. This means that they were not expected to be able to offer any kind of protection to the population should a new war break out. Much the same can be said of the Lebanese army.

5.8.3 Religious authority and Khiam as a Shiite town

When I first approached Mabarat and told them about my intention to do fieldwork in a Shiite village, they suggested that I should go to Bint Jbayl or Khiam. I subsequently choose Khiam because it is the smaller of the two, and I imagined it would be easier for me to get a more thorough impression of the state of affairs in a smaller town. However, I made it clear that I wanted to go to a Shiite village. Therefore it came as a surprise to me that the first thing I saw

when entering the town was a church, so I asked the men from Mabarrat who were driving me about it. They replied that, yes, of course there were Christians in Khiam as well, but most of them had left the town. Some would come for the weekend, while others would just visit in the summer. Others again had left the town permanently.

I was reluctant to query further, well aware that this is a sensitive issue. Officially, and not just from the Lebanese state, but also from Hizballah and others such as Fadlallah, all citizens are equal and there is no differentiation between the different religions and sects. Nevertheless, they still considered the town to be Shiite, despite the presence of Christians. It is a fact that the majority are Shiites and this is reflected in the composition of the *baladiyya* with a Shiite as its leader, so there was no hesitation on part of any of those I talked to in Khiam about labelling the town Shiite. Whereas other towns and villages have been labelled 'mixed', this was never used when describing Khiam.

It is difficult for me to assess the relative pre-eminence of the different Shiite 'sources of emulation' (*marāji'*) the Shiites adhere to in Khiam, for several reasons. The question of who one chooses as ones *marji'* is personal, therefore it is not a question one would just ask strangers. I did however ask my sources from Fadlallah's organization about who among these *marāji'* they considered to have influence among the population. They mentioned Fadlallah, Khamenei and Sistani, in addition to Shirazi, a reference to Muḥammad al-Shirāzī who is an Iraqi born ayatollah living in Qum, Iran.

In Khiam, Fadlallah has two offices, one is the sponsors' (*takafful*), office, mainly charged with getting sponsors for orphans through the Mabarrat, and the other is his legal (*shar'ī*) office. They are situated close to each other at the main square of the town. Besides these two offices, the Mabarrat runs the Maryam bin 'Īsā school, with close to one hundred employees and several hundred pupils.⁷⁶

This presence is considerable, but one of the reasons it is difficult to give an actual assessment of the number of followers is the fact that Fadlallah does not set as a condition for working in his organization that one should be an emulator (*muqallid*) of his. This was pointed out to me on several occasions, not least when I inquired about the relations between Hizballah and Fadlallah. I was then informed, as I had been on other occasions, that there were many

⁷⁶ According to the staff at the sponsors office in Khiam.

members of the party working in Fadlallah's organization, and that likewise there are many members of the party who are emulators of Fadlallah.⁷⁷

Another factor is that many people are not very concerned with choosing a *marji* ' to follow. They are Shiites, but maybe not very religious, or they just follow whoever the elders of their family follow. This point was underlined to me by an employee at the legal office in Khiam, who lamented the fact that so many did not have a conscious view on this matter. For her, a native of Khiam who had stayed there during the Israeli occupation of the town, Fadlallah was the obvious choice as her *marji* '. 'He is ours, he is a local, of course we should choose him!'

Despite the presence of two offices and a big school in the town, one thing surprised me. One of my sources told me he was on his way to the mosque to attend the Friday prayers. I asked him how this worked, would the *khuṭbat al-jum'a*, Friday speech, of Fadlallah, which he himself delivered in his mosque in Beirut be read out, or would there be a separate speech given in this mosque. 'We don't have our own mosque here, so I'll go and pray in one of the other mosques,' he told me, while assuring me that he would read Fadlallah's speech later. For an organization of Fadlallah's magnitude it seemed strange to me that they should not have their own mosque, but he told me that he did not think it mattered: 'We just go to some of the others and pray, we all know each other.' I asked if Hizballah had a mosque in town, which he confirmed that they had, along with one another, which I presumed was supported by the Higher Shiite Council, which is often seen as being closer to the Amal movement. The Amal movement has Sistani as its declared *marji* '.⁷⁸

Other charity organizations are also present in Khiam, including those belonging to Hizballah such as the 'Imdād 'Imām al-Khumaynī and the Islamic Relief Committee, besides the ones that are close to Amal. A common sight in shops around town was an array of collection boxes from the different organizations lined up close to the cashier. The Islamic Relief Committee was perhaps the most visible, as they run a small clinic and an ambulance service based just opposite the offices of Fadlallah in the main square.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ This will be discussed in the following chapters.

⁷⁸ <http://www.amal-movement.com/indexa1.htm>

⁷⁹ For more on Shiite charities in Lebanon, see Deeb p.88-95.

5.9 The role of external actors

There are several external actors who in different ways have a clear impact on the lives of the inhabitants of Khiam. It seems unproblematic to state that it is Israel who has had the biggest and most profound impact of all.

Given the proximity to the Blue Line, which marks the ceasefire line between Lebanon and Israel, Khiam has felt the presence of the Israeli state, even from before its establishment in 1948. Older people I spoke with claimed that local Lebanese families had sold land they owned in Palestine to ‘the Jews’ and several also related the story of a massacre committed by the Haganah in the neighbouring village of Houla just before Israel declared its independence. Then came the flow of Palestinian refugees following that declaration, many of whom sought shelter in villages close to the Blue Line, including Khiam, before being relocated to camps in other parts of the country. After the Arab League adopted the Cairo agreement in 1969, the whole south of Lebanon felt the impact of Palestinian guerrilla forces that started to use the area to attack Israel. In many ways this polarized the population here. While young men from the towns and villages signed up to join the different guerrilla groups, it was the general population who suffered the most from the Israeli reprisals that would follow an attack. Resentment grew at the way these Palestinian groups behaved towards the local population. Many I spoke with still felt a deep resentment towards the Palestinians because of this. In 1978, just three years after the outbreak of the civil war in the country, the Israelis invaded the south of Lebanon with the declared aim of uprooting the guerrilla groups. However, the Israelis stayed on, occupying what they called a security zone for the next twenty-two years. To manage their occupation they took advantage of the civil war, and managed to get a Lebanese Army Major, Sa’d Haddād, to defect and subsequently lead an Israeli sponsored army, the South Lebanese Army. The SLA continued to operate in the Israeli occupied zone until 2000, when the Israelis withdrew and left the SLA to fend for themselves.

I had the opportunity to talk to some of those who had served in the SLA, and the story each related was almost always the same. In the wake of the withdrawal, they surrendered to Hizballah. After being interrogated by them, they were handed over to Lebanese authorities who handed down sentences of 3 months in jail to all of them. After serving their sentences, they returned and continued their lives in Khiam and the surrounding villages. One of these former soldiers could not praise Hizballah, or rather Hassan Nasrallah, enough, as he said he had been very afraid and had expected a far harsher treatment from the party. Others would

also acknowledge that the treatment they got in the wake of the SLA collapse was fine, ‘*mnīh*’ – but it soon emerged that they were not happy with their present situation, suffering from economic hardship and the feeling of being completely sidelined. As one put it: ‘When the Israelis came, we did not do like them [referring to the Shiites of whom many fled], we stayed because our land is so important for us. What could we do?’ Yet others had relatives who had still not returned after fleeing to Israel, fearing long prison sentences should they return, a situation which seemed to be a source of agony for many. ‘Why should they not be allowed to return and [be] given the sentences we were, after all, think about what others have done during the war, and nothing happened to them!’ By this he was clearly hinting at the many politicians who went from being warlords to politicians after the war.⁸⁰

‘*Shukran Qaṭar*’, the slogan which could be seen all over Lebanon in the summer of 2008, had an extra dimension to its meaning in Khiam. Everyone I met expressed their gratitude to the little Gulf state, not just for bringing a temporal end to the internal strife in the country,⁸¹ but most of all for the reconstruction efforts it undertook in Khiam. Along with Bint Jbeil, ‘Ainata and ‘Aita Shaab, Khiam was promised rebuilding by the Qatari authorities, along with mosques and churches all over the south. The reconstruction efforts differed from those undertaken by other countries, in that the aid was distributed directly to the locals and did not go via the Lebanese government.⁸² When I first visited the town some two years after the end of the war, an estimated 70% of the reconstruction was complete but work was still ongoing.

The other main source of reconstruction aid for Khiam is Iran, with the Islamic Republic promising to rebuild all roads that were destroyed, not just in Khiam and its vicinity but for the whole of south Lebanon. Their efforts were also praised, and as with Qatar, the aid was distributed directly in cooperation with the *baladiyya*. Iranian influence was of course seen in many other fields, from pictures of Khamenei in prominent spots, to ambulances donated by the Islamic Republic.

5.10 Perceived solutions

⁸⁰ The only one to have faced prosecution and prison for war-related crimes is Samir Geagea, the leader of the Christian Lebanese Forces.

⁸¹ The so-called Doha Accord, *ittifāq Dawḥa*, which put an end to the crisis in May 2007. This crisis will be dealt with later.

⁸² Interview with Yāsir al Mana‘ī, January 2009.

5.10.1 'It must come from above'

Given that everyone I spoke to perceived there to be some kind of a problem relating to the state and its weak presence in Khiam, and indeed to the state itself on part of many, what could be perceived to be the solution, or a solution? 'You know, it's like when you are washing the stairs, you have to start from the top and work your way down. The same is the case for our state; change has to come from the top.' Without identifying a clear solution, my source was very clear as to how change should come about, thus clearly stating that the problems experienced by the population of Khiam were not only local, but had to do with the state itself. I asked him if his answer should be understood in the way that he wanted regime change, or a change of political system, but he refrained from giving a clear answer to that, instead pointing to the responsibility of the politicians to start behaving in a way that would benefit the whole country, not just Beirut and its surroundings or this or that sect, *ṭā'ifa*.

By this statement he also touched on a point many others would mention, not when talking about what they perceived to be the problems, but when asked about what they saw as the (or a) solution to their problems. 'The problem is that as soon as a problem arises, everyone will turn to their sects for a solution, not to the state. The idea of a homeland, *waṭan*, is still weak around here, and it is a serious problem.' Few if any would mention sectarianism as a problem initially, but when we discussed solutions, it would come up again and again as something that would need to be dealt with as part of any solution.

5.10.2 *Hudna ṭawīla* and peace between Syria and Israel

When asking people about their relations with, and view of, the Lebanese state, few if any mentioned anything about the conflict with Israel as part of their problems. However, when asked about what they perceived to be a solution to their problems, many would mention, some even as the foremost priority, a solution to this conflict. One of my sources told me immediately that there would be no solution to their problems with the Lebanese state as long as the conflict with Israel is ongoing. His desire for a solution was clear, there needed to be a peace agreement, *ittifāq salām*, between Israel and Syria, and a long-term ceasefire (*hudna ṭawīla*) between Lebanon and Israel. Before these two agreements were in place he claimed there would not be any improvement in the lives of the inhabitants of Khiam and the rest of

the country for that matter. He told me this in private, and his answer is significant in several ways. By implying the need for a solution to the conflict between Syria and Israel, he recognized the impact these two states, and their conflict, have on Lebanon. It also implies that a solution to local problems, should at least partly be found outside Lebanon. It is also significant in that this source, who is affiliated with Fadlallah, said frankly that he wanted a peace agreement between Syria and Israel, a call seldom heard from any Shiites. He stopped short of calling for a peace accord between Israel and Lebanon, but when I asked him about it, he said that he believed the ceasefire should be the first step towards such an agreement.

Others clearly recognized the impact of these two conflicts on their situation, but none went as far as calling for a peace agreement or even a ceasefire. On the other hand, no-one said that the destruction of Israel or the 'liberation of Palestine' is a prerequisite for solving their problems. Some would mention the possibility of some kind of an agreement with Israel, but then only as a result of the 'others' recognizing the Israeli state through peace agreements between the Palestinians and Israel and the Arab peace initiative.

Resignation was a common attitude when I asked them about how they perceived a solution to their problems. 'It doesn't matter what I think, no-one would listen to me anyhow,' is the answer I got from a woman working in Fadlallah's organization. Variants of this answer were given by many, but the reasons for it varied. Some were clearly reluctant to reveal their ideas or stances, and explicitly said so, while others seemed genuinely convinced that what they might have to say about it did not matter.

5.10.3 Opposition forces in Khiam

When I spoke with people about the presence of other political groups than Hizballah and Amal, they would simply say that there was no-one in town supporting such groups at all. Nor were there any visible signs of their presence around town in the form of posters, banners and the like. It was only later that I learned that they were actually there, and this in the form of a newspaper article about an official of the Lebanese Option Group (*Tayyār al-intimā' al-lubnānī*) whose car had been set on fire at night by unknown attackers. This was the second time within a month that the official, 'Aṣām al-'Abd Allāh, was the victim of such an attack.⁸³ In the elections held in June 2009, candidates of parties opposed to Hizballah got quite a few votes, but not many compared to Khalil, who secured another term as MP for Khiam.

⁸³ Now Lebanon 23.02.2009.

Based on my observations in Khiam, no-one questioned the role of the Islamic Resistance. They were seen as the only force who *could* protect the inhabitants against the Israelis, but also as the only force who could uphold order in the town. Statements about the need for a peace agreement between Syria and Israel and a long time truce between Lebanon and Israel might be seen as contradicting this. However, I will not draw that conclusion. While it is clearly a sign of war fatigue and an indication that not all are willing to sacrifice either their lives or their belongings time and again in confrontations with Israel, there are other considerations. Foremost of these is that Israel is still considered to be the aggressor and the source of the problem.

Civil society organizations, such as various charity groups, were seen as filling a gap made by the state's absence, but by many also as preferable to the state. This was expressed in particular when talking about education. The Fadlallah-run school was viewed as offering better facilities and a higher quality of education than the government-run school. It is worth noting that all but one of these organizations belong to groups loyal to the resistance.⁸⁴ Even though Fadlallah's organization stressed that they were also providing assistance to others than the Shiite community, this was limited to a single Druze family in Ibl during the time I was there.

Concerning the question of representation, it was taken for granted that the town would be represented on a national level by Khalil. At the local level, the *baladiyya*, everyone seemed satisfied with its present leader, but I have to add that this was not a topic I heard much about. I find it strange that the car of an opponent should be attacked in the way it was, as there was such an overwhelming support for the Hizballah-Amal alliance. It could be seen as a warning to opposing forces not to challenge this hegemony, even if it is unlikely that they would constitute a serious challenge to it. In the villages surrounding Khiam, the presence of other forces was visible, but only after the war in 2006, when the Islamic Resistance was forced to reconsider its *modus operandi*. From 2000 they had been the sole military force in the south, UNIFIL presence at the time was limited and the Lebanese Army was not deployed in the south. While not being willing to alienate the population in these villages further by attacking

⁸⁴ The only other such charity who operates there is the Jabal Amel Foundation, which have no political agenda whatsoever.

opposing forces there, an attack on them in Khiam could also be interpreted as a warning to these forces outside the town.

5.10.4 A local hegemony

If we measure these findings against the hegemony theory I presented in 2.6, I make the argument that Hizballah has a hegemony over the affairs of this local community. On the state level, which includes the military, the presence of the Lebanese state is very limited. It is Hizballah, through its Islamic Resistance, that has succeeded in convincing people that it is *only* them who are able to defend the community against outside aggression, and by extension, it is the one able to uphold order in the town. Given the limited presence of the state, it is civil society organizations that are the ones that have the economic means to provide services to the population, from education to material aid. While several different charities operate in Khiam, none of these challenge this hegemony. Amal should in my view not be seen as a challenge to Hizballah – rather they operate in coordination. They accept the hegemony of Hizballah and operate within its limits. Groups, or rather the group, which did not comply with this, was not only sidelined but actively sabotaged. On a religious level it is important to note that despite the fact that Khiam was originally a mixed town with a Christian population, it is treated as and considered to be a Muslim town.

6 Hizballah

6.1 Assessing the policies of Hizballah

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, the differences in how Hizballah, their policies and their goals have been analysed can be traced back to the first elections after the end of the civil war, in which Hizballah after lengthy internal debates chose to participate. In this chapter I will start the analysis by giving an insight into the ideological foundations of the groups that came to form Hizballah, and how this is expressed in their ‘manifesto’, ‘The Open Letter to the Oppressed in Lebanon and on Earth’ (*Al-risāla al-maftūḥa lil-mustaḍ‘afīn fī Lubnān wa al-‘ālam*). In conjunction with this, I will use a communiqué from the party to show that what it enforced on the ground was not always in conformity with its stated policies, but rather aimed at building an ‘Islamic order’ on the ground. Then I will discuss how participation in elections could be viewed in another way than as an acceptance of the Lebanese political system, i.e. mainly as a means to broaden the legitimacy of their main priority, the Islamic Resistance, and to expand and solidify their hegemony over Shiite Lebanon. Their commitment to the *wilāyat al-faqīh* doctrine will also be discussed.

The last part is devoted to the events of 7 May, 2008, in which Hizballah used their armed forces to occupy west Beirut and the mountains. How should these actions be understood, as an expression of strength or rather a hegemony in decline?

6.1.1 The origins of Hizballah

Without going into great detail about the formation of Hizballah, there are a couple of important factors which should be addressed, that is the roles played by Musa al-Sadr and Fadlallah respectively.

These two clerics had a profound impact on this process, albeit on different levels. Musa al-Sadr was important in that he was the one who started to organize the Lebanese Shiites as

Shiites, whereas Fadlallah was important as he was the one who provided the ideological foundation for the party, through his religious seminaries.

Al-Sadr formed The Movement of the Deprived (*Ḥarakat al-maḥrumīn*) to address the grievances of the Shiites, in 1974. As a staunch anti-communist, it is natural to think that at least part of his motivation was to counter the influence of leftist parties and not least the Communist Party, who like other communist parties in the region and especially in Iraq, included many Shiites.⁸⁵ A year later, the armed wing of the movement was founded, *ʿAfwāj al-Muqāwama al-Lubnāniyya*, known by its acronym AMAL. While al-Sadr himself was a cleric, Amal did not have a declared religious agenda, nor did it have a leadership composed mainly of clerics. Still, it appealed to many young, religious men who did not find it natural to join one of the Palestinian or leftist groups, to which a majority of the Shiites who took up arms at the beginning of the war belonged.⁸⁶

When the Islamic Revolution in Iran came in 1979, many young Lebanese embraced it fully, including a number of religious students who were members of Amal. It is important to bear in mind that just six months before, al-Sadr had disappeared while on a trip to Libya, presumably murdered by the Libyan leader al-Qadhafī. His disappearance evoked the memory of the disappearance of the twelfth Imam, and when Khomeini triumphantly returned to Iran, it created a religious fervour among many Shiites in Lebanon. Many would subsequently leave Amal to join the new party.

These developments coincided with the expulsion of many Lebanese students from the religious seminaries in Najaf, who had started their studies in the seminaries of Fadlallah. On their return to Lebanon, some of these went on to form a Lebanese branch of the *Daʿwa* party.⁸⁷ Other Islamist organizations, such as the Lebanese Muslim Student's Union, already existed.

When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, the nucleus of the new organization was already in place. Many of these former students happened to be in Teheran at the time of the invasion, where Fadlallah was also present. They met with Khomeini, who urged them to return home and fight the invaders. More importantly, he promised them concrete help. Units of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards were dispatched to Lebanon to train recruits for the new

⁸⁵ Norton p.42.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p.48-9.

⁸⁷ Saad-Ghorayeb p.13.

resistance, and offered vital support in the founding of Hizballah. The Guards took the village of Brital in the Bekaa as their headquarters: this is the home of Subhi Tufayli, who became the first Secretary-General of the party.⁸⁸ Among the ‘graduates’ from the first training camp they set up we find Abbas al-Mussawi and Muhammad Raad [Muḥammad Ra‘d], the second Secretary-General and present leader of Hizballah’s parliamentary block respectively.

6.1.2 The Open Letter

It took three years from these events until the party officially declared its existence, and this was done by the former Amal representative to Teheran, Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid [‘Ibrāhīm ‘Amīn al-Sayyid]. At a press conference on 16 February, 1985 he presented the manifesto of the party, ‘The Open Letter to the Oppressed in Lebanon and on Earth’ (*Al-risāla al-maftūḥa lil-mustaḍ‘afīn fī Lubnān wa al-‘ālam*).

This document is important because it presents the ideological foundation of the party, its world-view and how it viewed the Lebanese state. While Hizballah later issued electoral programmes⁸⁹ and, lately, a policy document,⁹⁰ the Open Letter remains the only document which could be called a manifesto.

‘We are the sons of the Nation of God’s Party in Lebanon’ the letter starts, and goes on to say that they consider themselves to be a part of the Muslim Nation in the world, ‘which is facing the most ferocious imperialist attack, (*‘a ‘tā hajmat al-istikbāriyya*), from both the West and the East, with the aim of emptying it [the *‘umma*] of its missionary content, (*bi-hadaf tafrīghhā min maḍmūnihā al-rasālī*),⁹¹ which God bestowed upon it, to be the best of nations brought to the people, to promote virtue and prevent vice... we are the sons of God’s Party, whose vanguard God made victorious in Iran, and who anew founded the core of the central Islamic State in the world... we obey the orders of one leadership, just and righteous, represented by the jurist-consult... materialized at present by the Imam the Grand Guide ‘Ayat Allāh Rūḥ Allāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī...’.⁹²

⁸⁸ Al-Shira‘ no.986 April 2000 p.24.

⁸⁹ See Al-Āghā p.403-470.

⁹⁰ Al-wathīqa al-siyāsiyya li-Hizb Allāh (2009).

⁹¹ The Open Letter in Al-Āghā (2008) p.435-452.

⁹² Ibid.

This is the main content of the first three paragraphs of the letter, in which they emphasize that they are the sons of a nation under attack, wanting to uphold a holy mission and submit themselves to the *wilāyat al-faqīh*. The emphasis on being under attack is a thread through the letter, and again and again the adherence to *wilāyat al-faqīh* is reiterated. It states that their choice is confrontation: ‘We see that the aggression can not be met [with anything] except with sacrifices; dignity will not be present except with the sacrifice of blood...’

The letter identifies their main enemies: America, France, Israel and the Phalangists, who are accused of being an essential part of the Zionist plot of which they are the victims. Those who choose to cooperate in the so-called Salvation Front,⁹³ practically all other Lebanese politicians, are denounced as part of this project, but the harshest attacks are reserved for the Phalangists.

Under the heading ‘Our goals in Lebanon’ four major goals are listed. First, to drive Israel out of Lebanon, as a forerunner to removing its existence, and to liberate Jerusalem from occupation. Second, to drive America, France and their allies out of Lebanon and to end any influence of any imperialist state in the country. Thirdly, to submit the Phalangists to just judgement and put them to trial for the crimes they have committed against Muslims and Christians with support from America and Israel. Fourth, to grant ‘to all sons of our people [the right] to decide their destiny, and to choose in freedom the kind of ruling system they like, knowing that we do not lessen our commitment to the rule of Islam and we call on all to choose the rule of Islam, which alone guarantees justice and dignity for all, and which alone prevents any attempt to spread imperialism in our country again’.

After this paragraph follows a section to ‘our friends’, calling on the downtrodden of the earth, all those who fight their enemies, to join them in fulfilling the greater goal of ending American hegemony over the country. ‘It is not important if a party controls a street, but the important is that the masses, *al-jamāhīr*, interact with the Party. It is not important if the citizen is facing increased militarization... but the important [thing] is that the operations against Israel increase.’ It is not important that these friends may not be Muslims, as their motives are considered as being originally Islamic. Again they state their commitment to Islam, but say that they will not force it on anyone, as political Maronism was enforced on them at the time. The letter repeatedly calls on all to accept Islam on a personal, political and

⁹³ Established by parliamentarians after the Israeli invasion in 1982, all the political groups including Amal participated.

social level, stating that there will be no alternative outweighing Islam, and that the least they are willing to accept concerning the realization of their goals, is to rescue Lebanon from subordination, to the West or to the East, to remove the Zionist occupation from their lands, and the authorization of a system decided upon by the people.

When assessing the letter, one should of course remember that it was issued in the midst of the civil war, when Israel was occupying parts of the country. It is however clear what the main pillars of the party are: the commitment to *wilāyat al-faqīh* and to promoting an Islamic system, the fight against Israel, and the conception that they are fighting a larger, imperialist hegemony over Lebanon. While they state clearly that they will not use force to implement their preferred Islamic system, it remains unclear what their reaction will be in the case of the majority refusing it.

6.1.3 The Islamic republic in Lebanon

While this was the stated policy of Hizballah, in the shadows they were preparing for an Islamic republic in Lebanon. There are documents that demonstrate the intention to form such a republic. One of these is a book called *A View to the Proposal of the Islamic Republic in Lebanon* (*Naẓra 'alā ẓaruḥ al-jumhūriyya al-'islāmiyya fī lubnān*). The writer is presented as Muḥammad Zu'aytir, but as I could not find any reference to him anywhere else than in this book, I asked several Lebanese scholars about him and they all said that this was an alias used by Hizballah.⁹⁴ There are also many indications in the book that support this view, for instance in the chapter called 'The Resistance is a means, not an end' the role of the resistance is discussed, displaying what seems to be a disagreement within the movement, at one point 'those who continue to hold celebrations and festivities under the name The Islamic Resistance'⁹⁵ are criticized for not making a strong enough effort to remove the 'Maronite regime'. Later in the book, under the heading 'Who is the leader?', a religious justification for the *wilāyat al-faqīh* is given and Khomeini is pointed to as the Imam and leader.⁹⁶ Apparently they did not want to disclose who really wrote this book, which is not surprising, taking the content of it into consideration.

⁹⁴ Among them Saud al-Mawla.

⁹⁵ Zu'aytir p.179.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p.159.

While the Open Letter stated that an Islamic state would not be enforced on the Lebanese against their will, the book argues that the Crusader-Zionist presence on the land of Islam (Lebanon) should be removed, along with the Maronite hegemony and its influence.⁹⁷ The Maronites are given the blame for all the ills that have befallen the country for hundreds of years; they are even blamed for the massacres of 1860, when they were massacred in the thousands!⁹⁸

‘Any Muslim who lives under the shadow of an un-Islamic rule, will every hour be exposed to violation of the Islamic rules, as long as the laws that are to be followed are not Islamic...’⁹⁹ This is arguing that it is impossible for a Muslim to live under any other rule than an Islamic one. To give us an idea about this rule, the author states that ‘The System of Islamic rule is not only cutting the hand of the thief or the flogging of the adulterer and the drinker of alcohol... rather it is also a system for social, political, and economic relations...’ In other words, it is a system encompassing all aspects of life.

The writer dismisses the idea that Muslims constitute a sect among other sects, but states that ‘we are above the sects and above the parties’.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, he says: ‘We will not demand anything from the Maronites, because we want everything. So it is not sufficient to change this president or a director of that ministry, because the matter is first and last that the legitimacy should be extended from the Quran and the Sunna, the issue of rule and politics are the prerogatives of Islam, which it is not possible for anyone to sacrifice.’ It would be difficult not to take from these statements that nothing short of an Islamic system of rule is acceptable.

It is clearly said that the only solution for Lebanon is to erect an Islamic system and all talks and discussions about it is dismissed out of hand. Given that this book was released several years after the Open Letter, and while aiming at the same goal, it prescribes a different way of reaching it. The question then is, how sincerely should one take the statements from the Open Letter that force will not be used to achieve their goal of a complete hegemony over Lebanon?

6.1.4 The Islamic order

⁹⁷ Ibid. p.12.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p.179.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p.52.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p.64.

An illuminating case is a communiqué issued by the Committee for the Revival of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prohibition of the Vice (*lajnat 'ihyā' al-'amr bi al-m'arūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*), which was distributed in the southern suburbs of Beirut in 1990.¹⁰¹ It is significant in that it paints a picture of the way Hizballah considers the areas under their control as Islamic, despite having an originally mixed population. They ignore the fact that sections of the Muslim population define themselves as secularists, and demonstrate that they find it justifiable to order the population to comply with orders such as:

- ‘Dressing modestly in order to preserve the Islamic atmosphere that has to thrive in the society of the Muslims, and as a reminder always that we live in Islamic areas, not in the country of unbelief and idolatry’;
- ‘not to arrange parties that are forbidden and cause insult to others, not to raise the sound of singing, either from [private] houses or cars’;
- forbidding card playing;
- forbidding the sale, buying, and use of alcohol and drugs.

These regulations are still upheld today in the parts of the country under the control of the party, maybe not as uncompromisingly as they used to be, but they are still in force. One will not find alcohol for sale in these districts and there is no open card playing or partying. In the first week of October 2009, a group of Brazilian samba dancers were prevented from performing in Tyre by local clerics, on the grounds that their performance was pornographic, and it did not help that the dancers promised to cover their bodies.¹⁰² Concerning the use of modest dress, the party has obviously had to moderate its stance in this respect following great unwillingness from the population at large to comply with this particular order.

The communiqué demonstrates that the party did not shy away from issuing orders and enforcing their views on others, contrary to their official policy as stated in the Open Letter. This was done under the pretext that these areas are ‘Islamic’. Instead of erecting an Islamic republic or a parallel state, these actions indicate that they wanted a kind of Islamic order in the Shiite parts of the country they controlled. This was not done just by promoting virtue and preventing vice but also by building institutions to care for the needs of the population in

¹⁰¹ Tawfiq p.137.

¹⁰² Daily Star 02.10.2009.

these areas. Schools, hospitals and a network of charity organizations were established there, some controlled directly by Hizballah, others by Fadlallah or the Higher Shiite Council.

6.2 Parliamentary participation

The question is then: did these views and practices change with the end on the civil war, and the subsequent participation of Hizballah in the parliamentary elections in 1992? Below I will look at the motives behind participation, and how they justified participation in a system they had sworn to annihilate just a few years earlier.

As mentioned above, the question of participation in these elections was a difficult one for Hizballah, and led to a split in the party. Their decision to participate is also the single most important event for the proponents of the view that a genuine shift occurred in the party's politics. A closer look at the motives behind participation raises doubts about such a shift. This is because it does not represent a recognition of the system, rather a willingness to work within it as long as Hizballah's own priorities are best served this way.

Naim Qasem writes that participation means taking part in the existing political system but it does not represent a commitment to preserving the system as it is, nor to defend its deficiencies or mistakes. Rather it is viewed as a place to represent a group of the people, and the issue of the system itself is open for debate. It does not demand an acceptance, or in his words 'an oath of allegiance', to the system.¹⁰³

The discussion then becomes one of weighing the advantages against the disadvantages, and here it is the Islamic Resistance which has the highest priority for Hizballah. This is clearly reflected in the considerations they made, in which the first advantage for participation in elections is given as: 'benefitting from the parliament as a political pulpit concerning the Resistance and its affairs, discussing support and aid for it... to let others hear the voice of the Resistance from the point of popular, parliamentary representation'.¹⁰⁴ One of the other advantages is that it will give recognition from one of the institutions of the Lebanese system to the representation by MPs of a particular section of the people, which makes the Islamic Resistance a part of the 'fabric' recognized both officially and popularly.

¹⁰³ Qāsim p.280.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Qasem is very clear when discussing this participation that in his view it is the Islamic Resistance that takes priority, not parliamentary work. The latter is only viewed as meaningful as long as it benefits the Islamic Resistance, and acceptable only as long as it is not demanded of the party to recognize the system itself.

The overarching question in this respect, about the legitimacy of participating in a system that does not correspond to the party's view of an Islamic system, was not discussed. According to Qasem, this question was of such magnitude that it was left for the *walī al-faqīh* to decide, and this brings us to the relationship between Hizballah and the doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh*.

6.3 Wilāyat al-faqīh

From its very inception, Hizballah declared their commitment to the doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, and to Khomeini as the sole political leader of the Muslim 'umma. Above was given one example of questions referred to the *faqīh* to decide upon, but what are the repercussions of this commitment, and how does the party define the prerogatives of the reigning *faqīh*?

Again Qasem is a valuable source, as he devotes a chapter in his book to this doctrine, because it is the religious and ideological fundament of the party. The *faqīh* is the representative of the hidden twelfth Imam on earth, and as such is the leader of the Muslim 'umma. He is the one responsible for effectuating the Islamic rulings and the one who decides peace or war, as well as the greater political decisions.¹⁰⁵ A distinction is made from the emulation of a *marji* ' in personal matters, because all political powers belong to the *walī*. So if a believer chooses to emulate Fadlallah in questions relating to personal matters, that is acceptable, as long as he or she defers to the *walī al-faqīh* for the general guidance of the Muslim 'umma.

At the same time it is made clear that it is the responsibility of Hizballah to implement these rulings, and here the party has great flexibility. They are the ones who know the local situation and therefore better suited to do this, and in cases of uncertainty of disagreement, they will defer to the *faqīh* for a legal ruling. A typical question of great importance such as participation in elections was therefore referred to Khamenei for a decision. As soon as his

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.74.

blessing of participation was given, it was up to the party to choose how to implement it. They were the ones who formed the election programme and the electoral alliances, and chose candidates and strategy.

In questions of principal, they will have to obey the rulings of the *faqīh*, such as in the question of erecting an Islamic state. Here there is no room for negotiation. The erecting of such a state is not considered to be a political decision, but a legally binding obligation.¹⁰⁶ This could not be taken to mean that it will be enforced on anyone. As stated above it is Hizballah who decides how it should be implemented, but there is no room to leave behind this goal.

The adherence to *wilāyat al-faqīh* is transnational, in the sense that the nationality of the *faqīh* is not important, according to Hizballah. On the other hand, he is the one who supervises and guides the Islamic Republic in Iran, while at the same time demarcating the political duties of Muslims in the rest of the world. In their view, this is two sides of the same coin, but one could imagine a situation where the interests of Iran are not necessarily those of Lebanon. If such a situation should arise, this would imply that Hizballah would side with Iran, as the Islamic Republic. One such scenario could be an attack on the nuclear facilities in Iran, where Hizballah will form a part of the retaliatory force of the Islamic Republic. This is a point of great concern for many critics of Hizballah. It does not imply that Hizballah is an Iranian party. Its leaders, members and supporters are Lebanese, and they operate in a Lebanese environment. Rather one should appreciate the religious bonds as the basis of their relationship, for Hizballah the idea of *wilāyat al-faqīh* is part of the article of faith.¹⁰⁷ In this view, an attack on Iran is considered an attack on Islam itself, and should therefore be countered.

Another implication of this adherence is the aid which the party receives from the Islamic Republic. The Islamic Resistance is equipped by Iran, and many of Hizballah's organizations are in fact branches of an Iranian mother organization, such as the Martyr's Foundation (*Mu'assasat al-Shahīd*). Hizballah has never denied this aid but they are unwilling to unveil how much it constitutes. Nizar Hamzeh estimated that the party receives the value of one billion U.S. dollars annually directly from Iran. This figure does not include the funds for the

¹⁰⁶ Abū al-Naṣīr p.50 and Qāsim p.40.

¹⁰⁷ See Qāsim p.70-80.

Islamic Resistance, which he estimates as being higher.¹⁰⁸ In addition to this comes the religious taxes the party collects from emulators of Khamenei, the *zakāt* and the *khums*. They are allowed to spend these taxes as they see fit, and have used them to build an impressive structure of organizations to provide services for their constituency. These range from clinics and hospitals to a construction company and media outlets.

6.4 Polarization in Lebanon

The dual *modus operandi*, participating in parliament while focusing on the Islamic Resistance, worked well for Hizballah in the years from 1992 to 2005. In 2000, the Israelis withdrew from the areas they occupied in south Lebanon, and for the party this represented a peak in their popular support. The withdrawal was not seen as complete, given that two small pockets were still occupied by the Israelis, so the Lebanese Army did not deploy in the south. Hizballah thus became the sole armed Lebanese presence there, which they used to fortify their positions and prepare for the next war with the Israelis. It also allowed them to cement their civil presence there, along with other forces loyal to the resistance such as Fadlallah's organization.

When Rafiq al-Hariri [Rafīq al-Ḥarīrī], the former Prime Minister who had a rocky relationship with Hizballah, was murdered in 2005, this position of strength started to come under pressure. Syria was blamed by many Lebanese for being behind the murder, and they eventually had to withdraw their forces from Lebanon. This in turn affected Hizballah as the foremost of Syria's allies in Lebanon, and the divisions over which path the country should follow were exacerbated. While tensions were brewing, a national unity government was formed, and Hizballah for the first time joined a government. At this time a number of politicians critical of Syria were assassinated, adding to the tense atmosphere and instability. The whole situation exploded in July 2006, as a result of a Hizballah operation in south Lebanon. The Islamic Resistance had entered Israel proper and abducted two Israeli soldiers, which in turn led Israel to launch a full scale war on Lebanon. Hizballah described the result as a 'divine victory', and was lauded by its allies for being able to stand up against Israeli military might. For the other side of the political divide in Lebanon the result was seen as a

¹⁰⁸ Hamzeh p.63

disaster. The country was in ruins and much of the infrastructure was destroyed, but more importantly it became clear that the decision of war and peace was not in the hands of the Lebanese state but in the hands of Hizballah.

These developments continued through 2006 and 2007 and now focused on the presidency. The term of staunchly pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud [ʿImīl Laḥūd] had ended without an agreement on a new President, and Amal and Hizballah withdrew their ministers from the government and started a sit-in in downtown Beirut to try to pressurize the remainder of the government into resigning. They were joined by supporters of Michel Aoun [Mīshāl ʿAwn], a former general who had returned from exile in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination. He had signed a memorandum of understanding with Hizballah in 2006,¹⁰⁹ and quickly became one of their closest allies. The reason Aoun had for doing this is outside the scope of my thesis, but for Hizballah it proved that working with other forces through parliamentary participation was valuable. Without changing their policies they were able to boost the legitimacy of the Islamic Resistance among the Christian population. The sit-in was in many ways a success for Hizballah, and by withdrawing from the government they were able to paralyse parliamentary life in the country, and the sit-in blocked economic life in the country as well.

6.5 The weapons used for internal political gains

At the beginning of May 2008 the government led by Fuad Siniora [Fuʿād Sanyūra] adopted two different decisions concerning Hizballah. The first was to remove the head of security at Beirut International Airport and the second was to dismantle the communications network of Hizballah. These decisions were taken as a reaction to the assassinations of opponents of Syria and Hizballah. There had been a pattern where many of these took place immediately after the return of the victims from abroad, and it was discovered that the airport was surveilled by Hizballah. Hizballah interpreted these decisions as a declaration of war against them, and reacted by seizing control over the predominantly Sunni west Beirut and the Druze-dominated Shouf mountains. They did what they had sworn would never happen, namely to use their weapons against other Lebanese for political gains. While the decisions by the

¹⁰⁹ For the complete text of the memorandum, see Al-Āghā p.488-92.

government of Siniora were undoubtedly aimed at Hizballah, it is difficult to see how they could have been effectuated. It would mean that the Lebanese Army would have had to enter into a confrontation with the party, something that was highly unlikely given that the commander of the Army at the time, Michel Suleiman [Mīshāl Sulaymān], was already agreed upon as the next President by all parties. He would not have risked his position by ordering a move against Hizballah, well aware that this would also lead to the disintegration of the Army. The crisis came to an end when the different factions went to Doha in Qatar and there agreed upon a formula to resolve it. This included the formation of a new government in which the Hizballah-led opposition was given a veto right, the new President was elected and the two decisions by the government which led to the confrontation were nullified.

6.5.1 Repercussions

While civil peace returned to the country in late May 2008, it was now basically split in two. On one side were Hizballah and its allies in Amal, who together with Aoun formed the main components of the opposition, known as the March 8 group. On the other side was the Future Movement, which had the support of the overwhelming majority of the Sunni community, the Druze under the leadership of Walid Joumblat [Walīd Junblāt]¹¹⁰ and the Christians party al-Kataeb [al-Katā'ib] and the Lebanese Forces. Their grouping, called the March 14, had organized itself as a political front with a secretariat and an elected leadership.

Nevertheless, the main result of these events was the consolidation and formalization of the strength of Hizballah. It broadened its legitimacy by entering into an alliance with Michel Aoun, kept its weapons outside the reach of the state and demonstrated that no political decision could be taken without their approval. While Hizballah does not put any emphasis at all on upholding an Islamic Order in non-Shiite parts of Lebanon, it would not accept that any political force could challenge its weapons, nor its position as the strongest party in the country. This was expressed in such statements as that of Nawaf al-Mussawi [Nawāf al-Mūsawī], the man responsible for international relations in Hizballah, who said that no person who distrusts the Islamic Resistance will be appointed to head any security apparatus or to any military position.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Joumblat and his party left the 14.March in 2010 and are now considered as independents.

¹¹¹ Al-Hayāt 22.06.2008 p.6.

Another indication that their military domination was expanding came in August 2008, when fighters from the Islamic Resistance shot down a Lebanese Army helicopter in the Sujud area. The war in 2006 ended with UN resolution 1701, which ended Hizballah's open military presence south of the Litani River. This meant that they expanded into areas previously not under their control, such as Sujud, which is situated between Jezzine and Marjayoun. The fighter who shot down the helicopter claimed that they mistook it for an Israeli military helicopter out to attack them. Hizballah came under pressure to submit their fighter to the Lebanese judiciary, which they eventually did, but he was released again shortly after. This created an uproar among their political opponents, and the family of the murdered soldier said that it was like their son being killed twice.¹¹² However, the case did not seem to have any repercussions for the Islamic Resistance, and the soldier was not prosecuted.

The development of the party is remarkable. What had started out as small groups of devout followers of Khomeini managed to develop into the most powerful of all the Lebanese parties. One of the main reasons for this is their strong ideological foundation, which has given them the flexibility they need to operate in such a complex country as Lebanon. Furthermore, this ideological foundation provided Hizballah with political backing from a regional power, and it facilitated the economic backing needed to build up an infrastructure in the areas under their control. Through the same ideological foundation they had access to military aid and support. Without this it is doubtful they had managed to reach the position where they are. Another important reason is the structure of the party itself, which has been labelled Leninist by some scholars.¹¹³ Unlike many other groups they have by and large avoided showing internal differences and managed to display a unified position. Their Shiite constituency find themselves as the leading political force in the country for the first time since independence, which again has helped to strengthen Hizballah's position among them, as it is thanks to the party they have arrived there.

On this basis, and compared with what I wrote in 2.6, I argue that all the important conditions for a exerting hegemony is achieved. Hizballah has been able to provide a wide variety of services to the Shiite community, where the State has failed or been unable to do so. The code of conduct promoted by the Party is by and large observed in the Shiite parts of Lebanon. But most important, the vast majority of Shiites view the Islamic Resistance as the only force able to protect them from outside aggression, and view the strategies pursued by the Party as

¹¹² Al-Masīra no.1232 June 2009.

¹¹³ See for instance Abu Khalil p. 401.

representing the interests of the community at large. By focusing on keeping the Resistance intact, and with strong Iranian support, Hizballah has managed to become an integral part of a regional counter hegemony to confront American and Western policies in the Middle East.

7 The views of Fadlallah

The position of Fadlallah is disputed on several levels, especially concerning his relations with Hizballah. In the following I will try to clarify this position as well as his position as to what he considered to be the main flaws of the Lebanese state and what he perceived to be the solution to these flaws. I will also try to situate him on the Lebanese Shiite stage, and show how his positions have developed over the years, much in the same way as those of Hizballah, but his stances on certain issues such as the question of the Islamic Resistance (the armed wing of Hizballah) and the Islamic Republic of Iran have been consistent over the years. These positions are in total harmony with those of Hizballah, and also on many religious issues it is interesting to note that the same expressions are used by both.

7.1 ‘Sectarianism is the main problem’

I explained to Fadlallah what I had found when talking to people in Khiam, and also thanked him for allowing me to conduct my research with the help of Mabarrat. When I asked him directly what he perceived to be the main problem for the Shiites of Lebanon in relation to the Lebanese state, the answer came swiftly. ‘Sectarianism , *al-tā’ifiyya*, is our main problem, not for the Shiites as such, but for all Lebanese. This is the root of the problem, and we need to solve it before we can have a functioning state.’¹¹⁴ He also mentioned other problems such as corruption, but was very clear about what he saw as the major problem. What is not so clear is the solution to this problem, but Fadlallah also came up with some statements in this respect which were very clear: ‘The biggest *‘ayb*, mistake or sin would be for two of the sects to try to rule the country without the third,’ he said.¹¹⁵

There are several ways to interpret this statement, but what is obvious is that Fadlallah was somehow manoeuvring within a discourse of sectarian representation. A civil state is not the same as a secular state, and Fadlallah was not an advocate of a secularized state in Lebanon. For Fadlallah, religion should form the basis of any state, in the Lebanese context with the cooperation between the different sects, and in the case of what is deemed as an Islamic or Muslim country, there should be established an Islamic state.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Fadlallah October 2008.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

These views were repeated in an interview with the Lebanese magazine *al-Shira*,¹¹⁶ which I was invited to sit in on. In the interview he was asked about his position regarding the Doha agreement that ended the strife of May 2008. Fadlallah said that he views this accord in the same way as he views the Taif agreement that ended the civil war in 1990. ‘I have said that the Taif accord is not a solution to the problem of today, but it represents the end of the war...’¹¹⁶ He went on to say that as far as he is concerned that it represents a consolidation of the Taif agreement, i.e. sectarianism. In the same interview he stated that Lebanon will not be stable as long as the sectarian system (of the Taif agreement) persists.

In the same interview that he gave to *al-Shira*,¹¹⁷ Fadlallah was very clear as to whom he considered to be the enemies, not only of Lebanon but of the region and the Arab and Islamic world at large: Israel, America and the West. Clearly he did not mean the entire West, something he was careful to point out to me as well, but he was still referring to the West as if it was a single entity. In one section of the interview he referred to a senior official from the Arab League who had told him that America’s goal is the destruction of Islam! This is quite representative of how he viewed the position of Islam in the world today, that the present era is a period of war – psychological, political, economic and in terms of security – between the West in general and the Islamic world, in a fundamental way.¹¹⁷

7.2 The Solution: *dawla madaniyya*

‘What we need is a civil state, *dawla madaniyya*, where everyone is treated equally regardless of their sectarian belonging.’ He went on to say that the biggest mistake, or sin, would be for two of the three main sects to build a state without the third. The main problem with these statements, in my view, is the lack of concrete ideas about what specific form this state would have, and how it would differ from the present Lebanese state.

Fadlallah is part of a Shiite tendency, *tayyār*, which contends that Islam is both religion and state (*dīn wa dawla*), meaning that he is in principle in favour of establishing an Islamic state. In one of his main intellectual works, *Islam and the Logic of Power* (*Islām wa mantiq al-quwwa*), he argues for propagating this idea, even if it does not become a universally

¹¹⁶ Al Shira, No. 1363 October 2008.

¹¹⁷ Al Shira, No.1362 October 2008.

supported one.¹¹⁸ There has been a clear development in the stances taken by him on the issue of establishing an Islamic state, with an early recognition that the very nature of Lebanese society would make it impossible under present circumstances to establish such a state. In the eighties he advocated a gradualist approach to the Islamic state, with the aim of creating the necessary conditions for it.¹¹⁹ Later on, he launched the idea of The State of Man(kind) (*Dawlat al- 'insān*), a state founded on common human values such as dignity and social justice.¹²⁰ Again, it is difficult to grasp how he perceived what this state would actually be like, i.e. how it would differ from the current Lebanese state. Equally important in this respect is the fact that he saw this state not as an alternative but as a forerunner to the Islamic state.¹²¹

The establishing of an Islamic state in Lebanon was not high on the agenda of Fadlallah, and had not been so for many years. Nevertheless, it was clear the he would have preferred the population at large, Christians included, to embrace the idea of an Islamic state. He made it very clear that this is not something that can be imposed on someone against their will, and it seems clear that the realities do not favour such a state. The ideal of such a state, however, continued to be a goal for the future.¹²²

In the same interview I referred to above, Fadlallah reiterated that the solution is *al-muwāṭana*, the idea of a state that treats its citizens as fellows and does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of sectarian identity. He went on to say that the current system gives the impression (*'awḥā*) to every sect that it represents an independent entity within its districts.

The problem with the idea of a civil state in the discourse of Fadlallah is that its implications remain unclear. For instance it is clear that such a state would mean that representation on the basis of sectarian identity would be abolished, but does this mean some kind of majoritarianism, where a perceived Shiite majority would install a government the other sects would have serious difficulties in accepting? The question is highly relevant if one looks at the present political alliances, where both Hizballah and Amal are allied with regional powers, Iran and Syria respectively, which other sections of the Lebanese population find

¹¹⁸ Fadlallah p. 234-7.

¹¹⁹ Sankari p.221-2.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 238-41.

¹²¹ Ibid. p.239.

¹²² Meeting with Fadlallah June 2009.

discomforting at best. So where did Fadlallah place himself in this national and regional landscape?

7.3 Fadlallah and his relations with Hizballah

There are differencing views of the very nature of the relationship between Fadlallah and Hizballah. There are those who clearly see a major difference between the two and those who see them as being two different expressions of the same idea.

Among those who see them as representing two separate trends, there is a tendency to stress the Arab identity of Fadlallah while using the relations between Hizballah and Iran as an indication of the latter's 'Iranian Shiism'.¹²³ It is true that there were controversies between the two at times, and I will try to point to the most important of these. Before that, one should consider the origins of their relationship, which preceded the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent formation of Hizballah.

As I have stated earlier, one of Fadlallah's main concerns was to establish centres of Islamic learning in Lebanon, among them *al-Ma'had al-Sha'ri al-Islami* in Beirut. He also taught at a centre in Baalbek established by Abbas al-Mussawi, who became the second Secretary-General of Hizballah. This centre subsequently became the base for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who were dispatched there.¹²⁴ At these centres of religious studies, many of those who later became the leadership of Hizballah were students, and as Hassan Nasrallah, the current Secretary-General of the party said when eulogizing Fadlallah, 'We were all his students.'¹²⁵

Another important point here is Fadlallah's association with *Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya*, where his friend Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was actively involved from the beginning. As for his relationship to the *Da'wa* party, the nature of it is not very clear. What is clear is the close connection between al-Sadr and Fadlallah, and Sankari describes his relation to the *Da'wa* party as close and informal, while others claim that he was a member there.¹²⁶ There can be no doubt that it must have been a very close relationship – I remember that the only picture on

¹²³ See for instance Shaery-Eisenlohr 156-57 and Al Shira' nr.1450 July 2010.

¹²⁴ Sankari p.165.

¹²⁵ Al-Manar 04.07.10 This expression was repeated through the day, as al-Manar reported directly from outside Al-Masjid al-Imamayn al-Hasanayn, the mosque that was Fadlallah's centre in South Beirut.

¹²⁶ Sankari p. 170-71.

the walls of Fadlallah's reception room was a photo of al-Sadr. Another indication of this is the fact that Nūri al-Mālikī, *Da'wa* member and Prime Minister of Iraq, came to Lebanon on a private visit a few days after the death of Fadlallah to give his condolences to the family.¹²⁷ This party was one of the components that later formed Hizballah, together with other groups, some of whom Fadlallah also wielded an influence on.

As for the relationship between Fadlallah and Khomeini, it is no secret that the former was an admirer of the latter. He travelled frequently to Iran together with other Shiite activists, and met with Khomeini.¹²⁸ It is at one of these meetings that Khomeini urged his followers in Lebanon to return and establish a true, Islamic organization.¹²⁹ This particular meeting took place in conjunction with a conference in Teheran in support for the downtrodden of the world, and coincided with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Present were most of those who formed the initial leadership of the party, and Fadlallah.

Another very important factor in this relationship, and something that is by and large overlooked by scholars doing research in this field, is that it was Khomeini himself who bestowed upon Fadlallah the rank of Ayatollah. This happened at a meeting at Khomeini's residence in Teheran in 1986 at which a new constitution for an 'Islamic Republic in Lebanon' was drawn up, a meeting supposedly attended by Muhammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn as well. While Fadlallah has denied having any role in the drawing up of this constitution, he has confirmed that he was indeed given the rank of Ayatollah by Khomeini in Teheran in 1986.¹³⁰ The accuracy of the story of Fadlallah being involved in the actual drawing up of this constitution might be difficult to discern but he did endorse an Islamic state in Lebanon in a survey conducted in 1986.¹³¹

7.3.1 Controversies in the relationship

The controversies between Fadlallah and the party came after the death of Khomeini and at first centred around the question of the *marji' iyya*. Al-Khū'ī, the Najaf-based *marji'* who Fadlallah had been the representative (*wakīl*) for in Lebanon, died shortly after Khomeini.

¹²⁷ Al-Manār 06.07.10.

¹²⁸ Sankari p.193.

¹²⁹ Hamzeh p.24 and al-Shira' nr. 926 April 2000; Man 'antum? Hizb Allāh'.

¹³⁰ Sankari p.226.

¹³¹ Ibid.

While the party followed the Iranian leadership, who chose to follow the 100 year old Ayatollah al-Arākī before Khamenei was declared *marji*’, Fadlallah chose to follow al-Sistani, who al-Khū‘ī had pointed to as his successor, before Fadlallah became a *marji*’ himself in 1995. Although this is not stated clearly anywhere, I would assume that one of the main reasons for not following Khamenei was that he was at the time widely criticized for lacking the scholarly qualifications to hold this post. One should bear in mind that at Khomeini’s death, Khamenei was not even an Ayatollah, but in the course of just a few years he reached the level of Grand Ayatollah, which would have been impossible for any serious *mujtahid* to endorse.

Another controversy, which might seem unimportant but nevertheless caused a stir, occurred around the same time. This was a disagreement with a Lebanese-born Iranian-based shaykh over an historically important episode involving Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet. The episode is important because it is one of the main sources of Shiite grievances against Sunnis, and Fadlallah, as a promoter of Muslim unity and rapprochement between Sunnis and Shiites, tried to interpret what had happened in a new way. This interpretation was met with a fierce attack from Shaykh al-‘Āmilī, accusing Fadlallah of weakening the Shiite community and seeking to destroy it from within. This led to a deterioration in the relationship between the Iranian leadership and Fadlallah, which also affected his relationship with Hizballah. These ties were however mended quite quickly, none of the two having any interest in a split within the Lebanese Shiite community, and this had after all been a controversy over a fourteen hundred year old episode. Besides, on the fundamental issues for both parties, they were in complete agreement.

7.3.2 A fundamental agreement on two key issues

This leads us to two key points for understanding Fadlallah’s stances and his relationship with Hizballah: (1) His view of Iran and (2) the views he holds on the Islamic Resistance.

As I argued above, Fadlallah not only supported but was also directly involved in establishing the Islamic Resistance, which is the armed wing of Hizballah. This support continued uninterrupted, even in the period where there were differences between the two. At a Friday sermon he delivered in his mosque in June 2009, Fadlallah stated ‘There is nothing left in

front of the Lebanese but to react with dependence on the resistance, which should not under any circumstance be turned into a contest, after it became clear that it is the deterrent force which exposed the enemy and forced it to accept failure and defeat.’¹³² This is of course but one example of his unwavering support for the Islamic Resistance, nor is it controversial in the sense that his support for it is so clearly stated that it has never become a subject of disagreement.

This stance means that Fadlallah was urging all the Lebanese to support a resistance which is founded on Shiite religious principles, led by Shiite clergy and which has made it very clear that it will not open up for the participation of other groups, nor will it put its arms under the control of the state.¹³³

Here it is also worth mentioning Fadlallah’s readings of what happened in Beirut on 7 May, 2008, when Hizballah, through the resistance and its allies, took over west Beirut and parts of the Shouf mountains. ‘I think there are mistakes, starting from the government, then these mistakes moved to the display inside Beirut, the government should have noticed the involvement, present and well known in Lebanon, of the Resistance. It was said the Prime Minister did not agree on the two decisions, and that there were pressures put on him from some ministers, but the way the question was administered could not have led to anything but what resembles May 7, and I think that what happened on May 7 needs a deeper examination of the nature of the situation that happened on the one side, and the nature of the Lebanese sensitivities on the other hand.’¹³⁴ This statement is difficult to read in another way than that he is making the government responsible for the armed takeover of west Beirut by the resistance, which he does not blame in any way for using its arms to achieve political gains vis-a-vis their opponents on the domestic political stage.

7.3.3 The Islamic Republic

As with the question of the Islamic Resistance, the stances of Fadlallah concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran have been consistent over the years, from the Revolution till his death. It is one thing to support Iran against an attack or to support its right to use nuclear

¹³² Fadlallah: waraqat al-muqāwama lā yajūz ‘an tataḥawwal ‘ilā sijāl. Friday sermon 19.June 2009, Fadlallah’s press office.

¹³³ Naim Qasem, *Now Lebanon* 18/05/2010.

¹³⁴ *Al-Shira‘* nr.1363 October 2008.

energy for peaceful purposes; it is another is to support it as the Islamic Republic. This is also linked with Fadlallah's stance on the question of *wilāyat al-faqīh*.

Again I will use the abovementioned Friday sermon to highlight Fadlallah's stance, and a special consideration should be given to the wording he used. The sermon was given after the Iranian presidential elections on 12 June, 2009. He opened by 'calling on the Arab regimes to consider the public display in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and its popular vigour, to which there is no analogue in the whole world, even when this vigour is exposed to some negativities or when it is tarnished by some confusion by way of the freedom which the regime increased, through which the people could express themselves clearly and transparently before the elections and after them... and we send to this free and proud people the greetings of Islam... with the spirit of guarding this blessed revolution which brought down the peacock of America and the Zionists in the area and made Iran the foremost supporter of liberation movements and resistance fractions in the world... this state which represented the true extension of original Muhammadan Islamic line, which put the fear in the heart of the enemy of the nation, *al- 'umma*, and especially the Zionist entity.'¹³⁵

The expression above to describe the 'true' Islam is interesting, as this is exactly the same expression used by Hizballah to describe what they contend is the 'true' Islam. Shaykh Ḥasan Ḥamāda, who is one of many clerics in the leadership of the party, uses the expression 'the original Muhammadan Islam' when describing what the party believes in.¹³⁶

From the above it should be clear that Fadlallah's support for Iran was based on the fact that he considered it to represent 'true Islam', not that it is merely a friendly state, like Syria.

In another statement from his office, released after a visit by an Iranian delegation in December 2009, he comments on the developments there: 'The Islamic Republic in Iran is passing through a very critical period , *marḥala daqīqa*, and any effort to weaken it represents a service to the project of the oppressor, *al-istikbār*, which the Zionists stand behind.'¹³⁷

7.3.4 Fadlallah and *wilāyat al-faqīh*

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ 'Abū al-Naṣr p.48.

¹³⁷ Fadlallah: 'Id'āf Īrān khidma li al-mustakbirīn wa li-faṭḥ al-ḥiwār 'alā kāfat al-mustawayāt, Fadlallah's press office December 30, 2009.

This brings us to the question of Khomeini's doctrine of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, of which Fadlallah was known to have an independent view. Based on the expressions above about the Islamic Republic representing the true Islam, I asked him about how these should be understood, given that he had previously held an independent view of this doctrine. The answer was in many ways atypical for Fadlallah, as it was very ambiguous. 'I still hold an independent view on this theory, *fikra*, and I do not consider it to be part of the article of faith, *al-'aqīda*, it is a question that should be left to be discussed by the *fuqahā'*.'¹³⁸ Given that Fadlallah himself was a senior *faqīh*, I would have found it natural to be given a more precise point of view on this important question. Another participant in the meeting asked him again, very politely, saying that he found the answer a bit unclear and requested that he elaborate. He did, but this time even more vaguely than the first time, saying that this question should be studied in detail based on the Iranian experience, while refusing to give any judgement based on what is brought forth by the Western press, which demonstrated during the war on Gaza that it was not trustworthy, calling on us who were present to wait for the legal treatment of the question.¹³⁹

His biographer claims that Fadlallah, from the Islamic Revolution and onwards, supported the idea of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, as the political activist he was. Even though he was the *wakīl* of al-Khū'ī, who did not support this idea at all, Fadlallah made a distinction between al-Khū'ī's absolute supremacy in religious and juridical matters and Khomeini's supremacy in political leadership and organization.¹⁴⁰ As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, this is the same distinction Hizballah itself make, a distinction between the *taqlīd* of another *marji'* and submitting to the supreme political leadership of the *wālī al-faqīh*.¹⁴¹

7.3.5 An alternative to Hizballah?

Given what I have demonstrated above, it seems strange to construct a major difference between Fadlallah on the one hand, and Iran and Hizballah on the other. There are several issues to consider here, the first one is what has been pointed out to me repeatedly by people

¹³⁸ Meeting with Fadlallah Beirut exchange 23.06.2009.

¹³⁹ See also the press release: 'Istaqbala wafdan min al-tullāb al-jāma'īyyīn al-amīrkiyyīn wa al-awrūbiyyīn 28.06.2009.

¹⁴⁰ Sankari p.176-7.

¹⁴¹ Qāsim p.81-2.

at different levels of Fadlallah's organization: he did not have a political party. While he definitely had a political agenda, he himself never had his own party, and so his followers, if they wanted to engage in party politics, would join another party, i.e. Hizballah.¹⁴²

Another issue is the constructed divide between the Arabian and the Persian. While there are differences in religious practice, I am not sure these could be made on the ethnic basis of Arab versus Persian. Shaery-Eisenlohr refers to some criticism Fadlallah made against certain Iranians for claiming that Iran is the headquarters of Shiism¹⁴³ but as should be evident from the examples above, Fadlallah himself considers the Islamic Republic to represent the political embodiment of the same Islam he defines himself as belonging to. While there were differences over the years between him and Iranian scholars, this should not necessarily be taken to mean that Fadlallah represented another trend in Shiite Islam.

Shaery-Eisenlohr argues that what Fadlallah was doing was to establish an Arab nationalist Islamism as opposed to an Iranian one,¹⁴⁴ but again I think that this should be viewed in another light. *Al- 'urūba*, 'Arabism', was traditionally associated with left-wing and secular parties, in Lebanon as much as anywhere else. Instead of looking at Fadlallah's embracing of Arabism as a way to distance himself from Iran, one should rather look at this as a way of claiming that there is no opposition between Islam and Arabism- On the contrary, according to Fadlallah these are tightly knit together. By claiming this, Fadlallah could reach out to sections of the Lebanese who saw Arabism as a pillar of their political outlook, thus also broadening his base of support, while at the same time undermining the monopoly the left wing had on this concept.

A third argument put forth is that the Iranians are displaying exaggerated feelings in the performing of religious rituals, not least during '*āshūrā*', commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusayn.¹⁴⁵ This seems to be a rather strange argument, as both Fadlallah, Hizballah and Khamenei have issued *fatāwā* forbidding the tradition of self-flagellation, which many Lebanese Shiites are known to practise during the yearly procession in Nabatieh in south Lebanon. Here, this procession is commonly associated with the Amal movement and the participants in it consider this to be the authentic version of an '*Ashūrā*' commemoration.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² I will briefly discuss Amal later, and why one does not find a visible presence of Fadlallah followers there.

¹⁴³ Shaery-Eisenlohr p.144.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p.148.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p.157.

Fadlallah wielded an enormous influence over the Islamist Shiite movement in Lebanon, and was instrumental in the formation of Hizballah, even though he was not directly involved in its organization. Shams al-Dīn, Hānī Faḥṣ and others were also important in that process but in the course of time these other clerics grew critical of Hizballah,¹⁴⁷ while Fadlallah stood by it and always claimed that he and Hizballah were part of the same Islamic trend (*ḥāla 'islāmiyya*). His support for the Islamic Resistance was unwavering, and the ones he considered as being the main enemy, America and Israel, are also the main enemies of the party. Even when it comes to language I found that it is much the same vocabulary that is used – the word for arrogant (*al-'istikbār al-'ālamī*) when describing the Americans and the word used for the oppressed (*al-mustaḍ'afūn*) are but two examples of this.

Some close associates of Fadlallah with whom I had long conversations claimed that his most important contribution to Hizballah was to moderate some of their more extreme views, such as those of forcing an Islamic republic on the Lebanese.¹⁴⁸ In retrospect, a more precise way of putting it would be to say that what he did was to support those inside the party who favoured conciliatory language. Both the party and Fadlallah were critical of the Taif agreement, while he immediately supported Hizballah's decision to participate in the elections in 1992.

At the religious level there were differences, but these were minor. Even though Fadlallah was the representative of al-Khū'ī in Lebanon and did not have Khomeini as his *marji'*, he respected the political leadership of the latter. He also considered the theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh* to be theologically sound, even though he did not consider it to be an article of the faith. That he himself claimed the *marji' iyya* in the mid-nineties, and thus became a competitor to Khamenei, was at the time a source of friction between Hizballah and Fadlallah, but seen from his position it would have undermined his standing as a religious scholar to accept Khamenei as a source of emulation given his weak scholarly credentials. While Fadlallah's own credentials were questioned by some, it became evident that he had the support of many Shiites in Lebanon, who took great pride in having a local as their *marji'*.

¹⁴⁷ See for instance Hānī Faḥṣ: *Al-dawla al-Lubnāniyya wa al-dawla al-muwāziyya* (part 1 and 2), *Al-Ḥayāt* June 23 and 24, 2000 and Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn: *Al-Waṣāyā* p. 27-8.

¹⁴⁸ Among those who mentioned this was Hānī 'Abd Allāh, his closest personal adviser, October 2008.

Fadlallah clearly moved and operated within the confines of the hegemony of Hizballah and the differences on some minor points does not change this. He did this not because of pressure or other considerations, but because from the very outset there was a fundamental agreement between the two on all major issues. His position as a senior religious scholar and leader was of great importance for the party, as he was instrumental in expanding their religious and political legitimacy. His contributions in other fields, not least education and social services, also benefitted Hizballah on several levels. By educating '*ulamā*' for over a generation, he helped expand the protelyzing of a radical, Shiite Islamism. Through his elementary, secondary and vocational schools, such as the one in Khiam, he reached wider than Hizballah did and thus contributed to attach more Shiites to his vision of Islam.

Significantly, he succeeded in projecting himself as a moderating force that could help contain the most radical forces in the Islamic milieu Through his emphasis on dialogue and his willingness to talk to even American officials, he was seen as being open – and people or groups who had strained relations with Hizballah would talk with him.

8 Amal

Amal could be viewed as an alternative to Hizballah for several reasons, the most important being that it does not have the same ideological foundation as Hizballah nor does it have an armed wing. Shaery-Eisenlohr argues that it represents a more genuine Lebanese Shiism while Hizballah represents an Iranian one.¹⁴⁹ I argue that Amal has lost much of its previous influence, and that they operate within a framework created by Hizballah. Despite their religious differences, I will also refute the allegations that they represent a more genuinely Lebanese expression than Hizballah.

This has much to do with the origins of Amal and its founder, Musa al-Sadr, being Iranian himself. It is true that he can easily trace his lineage back to Lebanon, but through his life he spoke Arabic with a heavy Persian accent and the same is true for his sister Rabab who today heads a charity foundation.¹⁵⁰ There were also Iranians working with Mousa al-Sadr long before the Iranian Revolution, the most well-known of these being Mustafa Chamran, who became a minister after the Revolution.¹⁵¹ That the links between the movement and Iran are still strong, albeit on a different level than Hizballah, was evident during the visit of the then President Khatami to Lebanon in 2003. Khatami is married to the niece of Musa and Rabab al-Sadr, and he was given an extraordinary welcome when he arrived, not least by Amal leaders who were eager to point out this relationship.

Although not a religious party like Hizballah, on the homepage of Amal one will find that they have Ali Sistani [‘Alī al-Sīstānī] as their *marji*.¹⁵² Sistani is himself an Iranian, but he resides in Najaf, Iraq. This places Amal in the mainstream of world Shiism today, and does not make them more Lebanese in religious practices than Hizballah or other Lebanese Shiites. In Lebanon, Amal is associated with the Supreme Shiite Council (*Majlis al-Shi‘ī al-‘Alā*), set up by Musa al-Sadr in 1967 and today led by Abd al-Amir Qabalan [‘Abd al-‘Amīr Qabalān].¹⁵³ This body appoints Shiite judges and muftis for the different Lebanese districts, and represents the Shiites officially; their Sunni counterpart is the *Dār al-fatwā*.

¹⁴⁹ Shaery-Eisenlohr p. 156-7.

¹⁵⁰ NBN: Al-Aḥzāb al-Lubnāniyya; Ḥarakat Amal.

¹⁵¹ Norton p.57.

¹⁵² See <http://www.amal-movement.com/index1.htm>

¹⁵³ <http://www.shiitecouncil.com/edara/index.php?id=1>

As explained earlier, it was the founder of Amal, Musa al-Sadr, who initiated the process of mobilizing the Lebanese Shiites socially and politically. Following his disappearance, Amal developed into an organization resembling the other Lebanese factions at the time. The new leader, Nabih Berri, did not have a religious background. He was a lawyer and a former member of the Baath Party.¹⁵⁴ Following the Israeli invasion in 1982 he joined the other leaders in the so-called National Salvation Front (*hay'at al-'inqādh al-waṭanī*) set up to negotiate with the Israelis on behalf of the Lebanese authorities. This was also the direct reason many Amal members left and joined the newly formed Hizballah.¹⁵⁵ In common with other Lebanese armed groups during the civil war, Amal resorted to extortion to finance their warfare throughout the eighties.¹⁵⁶ This period was also a period of rivalry between Hizballah and Amal, which started with the camps war in 1985. This war was launched by Amal with strong Syrian backing against the Palestinian refugee camps, which Hizballah publicly criticized.¹⁵⁷ The war was a prelude to the war between Amal and Hizballah over the control of the southern suburbs of Beirut, which led to the near destruction of Amal and gave Hizballah near complete control over the suburbs.¹⁵⁸

A new phase began with the end of the war in 1990. Amal, represented by Berri, was one of those who had negotiated the Taif agreement. In the elections of 1992 they formed an electoral alliance with Hizballah under Syrian supervision, an alliance that is still in place. Amal in the post-war period developed into a more or less regular political party, its resistance activities were taken over by Hizballah while Amal focused on parliamentary work. They have had the speaker of parliament position all through this period and on this front they have been useful for Hizballah. With Syria being the main power-broker in Lebanon during this period, the influence of Amal on the parliamentary life in the country increased. Outside of parliament, their standing weakened as Hizballah expanded their cultural and military hegemony in Shiite Lebanon. Their resources cannot compete with those of Hizballah. Their main contribution comes from channelling money from the state through the Council of the South. The charities associated with Amal are also minor compared to those of Hizballah.

¹⁵⁴ Norton p.91.

¹⁵⁵ Al-Shira' nr. 926 April 2000 p.24.

¹⁵⁶ See Shaery-Eisenlohr p. 77.

¹⁵⁷ Traboulsi p.230.

¹⁵⁸ See Tawfīq p.115-125.

With the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2006, Amal entered a new phase, and had to depend more on Hizballah than they had before. Both due to the Islamic Resistance and its work in civil society, Hizballah had the upper hand in this relationship. While things were smooth on the surface, it is clear that not everything was fine in their relationship. This became evident in the recent elections. Both Amal and Hizballah are part of the March 8 alliance, and they now have to take Michel Aoun into consideration. For Amal, Aoun represents a competitor, much more than Hizballah. As shown above, Hizballah does not have parliamentary work as its main priority, thus they have never put an emphasis of having the largest number of MPs, unlike Amal and Aoun, who failed to present a joint list in Jezzín, where two Maronite and one Greek Catholic seats were up for grabs. It became evident during the campaign that personal relations between Aoun and Berri were not good at all. This was a challenge for Hizballah but they did not directly intervene – they have a long and tight relationship with Amal, while Michel Aoun represents a very valuable asset for the party too. The elections resulted in a victory for Aoun, whose list won all three seats.¹⁵⁹

The relationship between Amal and Hizballah is still close, despite such events as the one in Jezzín. Amal does not have any military capabilities of its own, and its economic resources are limited compared to those of Hizballah but they play an important role as an allied force in parliament, and they were instrumental in paralysing parliamentary work from 2007 to 2008, as Berri in his capacity as speaker was the one who refused to convene the Parliament. During the May 2008 events they were also mobilized and took to the streets of west Beirut. They have never challenged Hizballah hegemony over Shiite Lebanon, rather they operate within it. To a certain degree they share the same origins as Hizballah, through the work of Musa al-Sadr, but they lack the strong ideological foundation of the party. This is an important part of the reason why Amal is not able or willing to challenge Hizballah's hegemony over Shiite Lebanon.

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.elections.gov.lb/Parliamentary/Elections-Results/2009-Real-time-Results>

9 Shiite critics of Hizballah

Following the events in May 2008, when fighters from Hizballah and their allies in the Syrian National Social Party and Amal occupied west Beirut and the Shouf mountains, a new wave of criticism was launched against the party. There are two points of interest here, first that it was to a large degree other Shiites who were in the forefront of the criticism, and second that much of the criticism against the party took the form of criticism against the theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh*. I will concentrate on assessing some of this criticism offered by other Shiite intellectuals, and their main points of divergence from the party. The way criticism is dealt with is important to measure the success or failure of a hegemony. As I wrote in chapter 2.6, a strong hegemony would require a minimal use of violence to uphold it, while one of the signs of a weak hegemony is that more violence or other sanctions would be required to safeguard it.

9.1 The case of Ali al-Amin [‘Alī al-’ Amīn]

The case of Ali al-Amin is of interest, as it pitted an independent and outspoken cleric against the ‘establishment’ represented by the Supreme Shiite Council and its Vice-President shaykh Abd al-Amir Qabalan. As will be remembered, it was Musa al-Sadr who formed the Council, and it represents the Shiites vis-à-vis the state, which also finances many of its activities. One of the prerogatives of the Council is to appoint muftis for the different regions of the country where there is a Shiite presence, and Ali al-Amin was appointed *ja’farī* mufti of Tyre in 2002. Al-Amin had studied under Fadlallah and had spent ten years in Najaf followed by three years in Qum before returning to Lebanon, where he started to teach at the seminaries of Fadlallah.¹⁶⁰

Initially there was no controversy surrounding al-Amin. He was seen as being close to Amal, for which Tyre is a traditional stronghold. However, by 2004 there were reports about an increasingly strained relationship with Qabalan.¹⁶¹ Following the assassination of Hariri in 2005, these differences seem to have increased, but it was in the aftermath of the July War in 2006 that the mufti took an open stand against Hizballah, claiming that the war was against

¹⁶⁰ Sharāra p.90.

¹⁶¹ LebanonWire 28.08.2004.

the wishes of the Shiites in the south in general, saying ‘no-one authorized anyone to declare war in the name of the Shiites’.¹⁶² In the same interview he also criticized the Lebanese state and said that the war came as a result of a vacuum left in the south by the state who had relinquished its duty to defend the region and its citizens.¹⁶³

After the takeover of Beirut and parts of the mountains by Hizballah and its allies in May 2008, the conflict exploded and the controversies between Qabalan and al-Amin came out into the open. Qabalan called the decision from the government that sparked the takeover a declaration of war against the Islamic Resistance, while al-Amin lambasted the party and its actions. The Lebanese paper *al-Nahār* published letters issued by the Higher Shiite Council in which al-Amin was formally deposed from his post as mufti of Tyre, as well as the reply from al-Amin.¹⁶⁴ He had already been forced to leave his house in the city because a mob of several hundred had attacked his house. Al-Amin himself said that he recognized several of the perpetrators as they were former students of his, and claimed that they belonged to Amal.¹⁶⁵

The first letter sent to al-Amin from the Council was in the form of a long list of grievances and accusations against al-Amin, such as the lack of reporting about the state of affairs among the Shiites in the area, accusing him of using his time to meet politicians and journalists and writing political articles for publication in the press and expressing himself on behalf of the Shiites. The letter ends with al-Amin being given a week to present a defence against the accusations.¹⁶⁶

In the reply from al-Amin to Qabalan, he said that he was following the same position that he has taken since the eighties, and that he had striven to ‘...protect the interest of the Shiite sect, to whom [he does] not see any interest for outside the interest of the Lebanese homeland and coexistence with the remaining Lebanese sects, and the erection of the State of institutions and law, which forms the protection and the safeguarding for all the Lebanese’. He continues, ‘It is not in the interest of the south and its population that its territory should remain a field for open warfare and a launching pad for rockets...’¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Al-Nahār 26.08.2006.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Nahār 11.06.2008 p.9.

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.al-amine.org/article.php?id=115>

¹⁶⁶ Al-Nahār 11.06.2008 p.9.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

On several occasions both before and after his eviction from Tyre, al-Amin has been very critical of the *wilāyat al-faqīh* theory, and he thus follows the main trend of criticism coming from other Shiites. Like them he links this theory to Iran, thus questioning the loyalty of Hizballah to Lebanon and the Lebanese state.

9.2 Other critics

Another well known critic of Hizballah was the former President of the Supreme Shiite Council, Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, who died in 2001. A senior cleric, who spent over thirty years studying in Najaf, he co-founded the Supreme Council with Musa al-Sadr and following the latter's disappearance in Libya, he was elected President of the Council in 1984. His testimony (*waṣāyā*),¹⁶⁸ which he wrote shortly before his death in 2001, is a very important document in that it gives a different vision of Lebanon than the one conveyed by Hizballah. The first paragraph is a call on all Shiites in the world to assimilate into their various communities and homelands and not to create any particularistic project setting them apart from others.¹⁶⁹ This is a clear critique against anyone who talks about erecting an Islamic order or state, but also to those who create political party blocks (*takattulāt ḥizbiyya siyāsiyya*) on a Shiite basis.¹⁷⁰ He goes further in this direction, warning against removing the system of representation on the basis of sectarian identity.

His son Ibrahim continued the path of his father and became a member of the unity government formed after the Doha agreement. In the aftermath of the events of May 2008 he was one of many intellectual Shiites who criticized Hizballah for their actions. His initial remarks were a citation of his father, that the Shiites should not have any projects outside the framework of the state, but it is the critique of *wilāyat al-faqīh* that is the fundament of his grievances against Hizballah. He goes right to the core when asking the question about the legitimacy of power: does it belong to God or humans? In the view of those who believe in the legality of *wilāyat al-faqīh* it belongs to God, represented by the *walī*, who is not elected by the people, and whose power extends to Shiites all over the world. Shams al-Din refutes the legality of this system, and warns that the project of Hizballah remains to establish an

¹⁶⁸ This is a plural meaning testimonies, but the English title of the same book is The Testimony.

¹⁶⁹ Shams al-Dīn p.27.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p.29.

Islamic republic in Lebanon. He claims that what Hizballah did by taking to the streets and using their arms constitutes a revolt against the state, forcing upon others their views and disrespecting the institutions of the state. He also voices his criticism against Hassan Nasrallah personally, who had claimed in a previous speech that he respected pluralism and participation, asking rhetorically, 'Where was that participation on May 8?' Against this he advocates the strengthening of the state and the rule of parliamentary democracy, calling on the Shiites to make their political project a part of a complementary project of the state they belong to.¹⁷¹

Another critic is Saud al-Mawla, who is associate professor in sociology at the Lebanese University. In a special edition of the Egyptian magazine *Al-Hilāl* in October 2008 called *Dawlat Hizb Allāh fī Lubnān*, he wrote a long article about the party. Here he claims that Hizballah was formed as a branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in Lebanon,¹⁷² and cites Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid as saying that the *faqīh* (Khomeini) is the only one who Hizballah rely on in taking political decisions, as the prerogatives of the *faqīh* knows no borders.¹⁷³ Al-Mawla worked with Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din for a long period, and cites the latter for having said that even the name Hizballah is unacceptable. If one group belongs to Hizballah it must mean that the others belong to *Hizb al-Shayṭān*, the Party of the Devil. This way of defining the people is unacceptable; he again cites Shams al-Din for saying that even the use of the name of God in a political party is refused.¹⁷⁴ In a conversation I had with al-Mawla he repeated his critique of Hizballah for behaving in a totalitarian way and monopolizing the voice of the Shiites. For him the actions taken by the party in May 2008 conveyed their true face: what they cannot achieve by other means they will use their weapons to achieve.¹⁷⁵

9.3 Hizballah's response

The response on part of Hizballah to these critics took different forms. While al-Amin was physically threatened and driven out of his home, none of the others has experienced this. According to al-Amin it was followers of Amal who attacked him, but both Hizballah and

¹⁷¹ Now Lebanon July 13.2008 This is an Arabic translation of an interview with Ibrahim Shams al-Din in the French-language daily L'Orient le Jour. All citations are from this interview.

¹⁷² Al-Mawla p. 125.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p.127.

¹⁷⁵ Conversation with Saud al-Mawla January 2009.

Amal refrained from issuing any comments on the issue. His case shows how the Shiite establishment and allies of the party move to curb critics of Hizballah, because it was not the Supreme Council or Amal that was criticized by al-Amin, it was Hizballah. Unlike the others, he held a position which could have been used to gather support for his views among Lebanese Shiites. To give any legitimacy to a senior Shiite cleric who opposes their views would be more dangerous for Hizballah's legitimacy than independent academics voicing their criticism. They do not have an apparatus backing them, nor are they actively involved in party politics.¹⁷⁶ They all challenge the picture Hizballah conveys of representing the Shiite voice, but they are marginal on the stage of national Shiite politics and it is highly unlikely that any of them, al-Amin included, would constitute a threat to Hizballah's position. The same can be said of other Shiite groups, like the Lebanese Option Group led by 'Aḥmad al-'Asad or the Free Shiite Movement led by Muḥammad al-Ḥājj Ḥasan.

¹⁷⁶ Ibrahim Shams al-Din was a member of the government, not an MP, and he was picked by the President, not by a party.

10 Conclusion

Having conducted my fieldwork in Khiam with the Mabarrat, and obtaining valuable information and insights from all the people I met there and in neighbouring villages, and compared this information with the situation of the Shiites on a national level, a picture is starting to emerge.

This is a picture of a major Shiite trend comprised of many separate actors who together work within a common, agreed framework, which has some rules that are not to be broken. The most important of these rules is the absolute sanctity of the weapons of the Islamic Resistance, and the acceptance by these actors that it is the Islamic Resistance that is the defender of the territory and the facilitator of a framework providing social security for the population. It is not Hizballah who is the sole provider of the needs of the population when it comes to other fields, like education or health services. This is where the other, non-armed groups, parties, and charities have their place. Together, these groups are striving to fill the vacuum left by the largely absent state, but a clear condition is the acceptance of the framework of the resistance. Different groups complement each other in this field, even though they in some ways compete for the same resources in the form of gifts, contributions, religious taxes and the like. Despite the lack of a formal framework for cooperation and coordination, they put an emphasis on not competing with each other, at least not openly. So when the Mabarrat has a school in the town, the 'Isā bin Maryam School, this would mean that Hizballah is not in a great hurry to establish one of their Mahdī schools in the same town. This is also true for mosques: Fadlallah does not have his own mosque in the town, and his followers go to one of the other mosques to pray.

Another factor is the position of political opponents, that is, those groups who do not belong to the March 8 camp. While I was in Khiam, I could not detect any presence of these groups, and when I asked my contacts and sources about this, they would say that no-one there supported these groups and that is why they are not present. In neighbouring villages which did not have a majority Shiite population, like Ibl al-Saqi where I stayed, these had a visible presence, together with groups from the Mach 8 camp, like the Free Patriotic Movement of Michel Aoun. Only later did I learn that at least one of these groups in opposition to Hizballah, the so called Lebanese Option Group lead by 'Aḥmad al-'Asad, were present in

Khiam. This came to my notice as newspapers reported about yet another attack against this group by unknown assailants, where for the second time the group's representative in Khiam had his car blown up.

The rules which I referred to earlier, as put forth by the so-called Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in the early nineties, preventing the sale of alcohol, noisy parties and so on, is by and large observed in Khiam, with the exception of enforcing women to wear the hijab. As for the youths of Khiam, they would visit the neighbouring towns and villages such as Marjayoun or Ibl to drink, but even this has largely stopped now, according to restaurant owners I spoke to in Ibl. The shift came following the war in 2006, they claim. Before that it was not uncommon at all for the youths of Khiam to visit. Even then troubles would often arise when more or less drunk youths started singing songs in support of the Islamic Resistance or shout insults against leaders like al-Hariri and Walid Joumblat.

Another point of great importance is how the towns and villages are treated and viewed by the Shiites themselves. When I set out to do my fieldwork, I asked the Mabarrat if it would be possible for me to do my fieldwork in a small, Shiite village in the South where Fadlallah had some kind of presence. Only later did I notice the churches in the town, and when I asked my contacts about whether Khiam was actually a mixed Christian and Muslim town, they would confirm that. Most, if not all, Christians had left the town, but some would come in the weekends and holidays, like other migrants and emigrants, either from Beirut or from abroad. The interesting here is that the town was obviously viewed as Shiite, despite the presence of Christians, and as such, the rules mentioned above were enforced.

These findings correspond to the results of my analysis of the situation of the Shiites on a national level. The groups representing the community on a national level, both political ones like Hizballah and Amal, and religious like Fadlallah and the Higher Shiite Council operate within the same common framework. Again the overriding principle is the sanctity of the weapons of the Islamic Resistance, and, as on the local level, the different groups operate a number of schools, hospitals, social charities and mosques. On this level there is an important factor not to be missed: the funding from the Lebanese state to different projects in the South is channelled through the so-called Council for the South, which is headed by Nabih Berri. The other groups, with the exception of the Higher Shiite Council, which is also state-funded, relies on other sources for their funding. The operations run by Hizballah, including the

Islamic Resistance, are largely funded by Iran or with Iranian assistance, for example the Martyr's Foundation (*Mu'assasat al-Shahīd*) is a branch of an Iranian foundation. Another indirect, assisted way of funding is religious taxes, both the *zakāt* and the *khums*, which are collected from those who follow Khamenei as their *marji'*. These taxes are spent in Lebanon, with permission from Khamenei, and are an important source of income. This has enabled Hizballah to establish an impressive structure for providing for the needs of its constituency, from the cradle to the grave, to a far larger extent than the rest of the other groups combined. They have managed this not least due to a solid ideological foundation, and by reading the shifting political situations cleverly. The *wilāyat al-faqīh* doctrine has proved flexible enough to allow for this. During the civil war the focus was on a military *modus operandi*. Not just concerning the fight against Israel, but also on gaining control over Shiite areas of Lebanon. With the end of the civil war Hizballah managed to continue its fight against Israel militarily, not least due to their participation in the Lebanese parliamentary system. However, their strategy towards Shiite civil society is perhaps the most important factor for their success, where they have managed to turn the focus on the Islamic Resistance into a culture of resistance. The Islamic Resistance is viewed by Lebanese Shiites as representing them, and criticism against it is viewed as criticism against the Shiites. Thus the most important condition for establishing a hegemony is fulfilled, as the Shiite population in Lebanon view Hizballah's position as a necessity.

Concerning the other areas of Lebanon with a majority of Shiite inhabitants, like the southern suburbs of Beirut and parts of the Bekaa valley, the same rules seem to apply for those as for Khiam. It is the party that is in charge of security, but other groups are also present. As in Khiam, there is no open presence of groups opposed to the hegemony of Hizballah, these groups or individuals are actively opposed, like in the case of 'Aḥmad al-'Asad, or actively ignored as in the case of Ibrahim Shams ad-Din and others. These people usually do not live in areas under the party's control, thus they are able to speak relatively freely, but by the same token none of them constitute a direct threat to Hizballah, as they are not organized or armed, and their resources are relatively limited.

If we compare this to the theory of hegemony as I outlined in chapter 2.6, I argue that Hizballah has managed to establish a hegemony over Shiite civil society. The rules of conduct they put forth is by and large observed, and their position as the main provider of services to this community is unchallenged. While other organizations also provide services to the

Lebanese Shiites, none of these challenges the position of the party. Rather they operate within the framework of this hegemony. Through a strong ideological foundation, Hizballah has managed to get this society to accept their interests as the common interests of the community. This is not least evident when it comes to the Islamic Resistance, which is seen as the protector of the community. However, here it is also evident that the party has not been able to extend this hegemony to other sections of Lebanese society, as large parts of the population do not view the Islamic Resistance as their protectors, and would prefer that Hizballah's weapons be put under the command of the Lebanese state.

On the economic level, Hizballah has, through its access to resources from both abroad and Lebanon, managed to strengthen its position as the hegemonic force in Shiite Lebanon. The party has never sought to be a dominant force in the business life of this community, rather it has wanted to prevent other forces from using economic power to challenge its position. It has succeeded in this with regard to the Shiite community, but not with regard to Lebanon. There are many wealthy businessmen who oppose their position, not least Sa'd al-Ḥarīrī, the current Sunni Prime Minister.

While the party has not been able to extend its hegemony to the rest of Lebanon in civil society and on the economic level, it has managed to enforce its hegemony militarily. It has been able to do this due to the hegemony it holds over Shiite Lebanon, which has given them a solid base to expand from. This is also the main priority for Hizballah, and this is also their greatest success. While not at all accepted by Lebanese society at large, it is a fact that the party occupies a position in which it can impose its views through the use of force. This became evident during the events of May 2008.

Those events *could* be seen as an expression of a weakened hegemony, i.e. resorting to the use of force to uphold a hegemony would indicate that – but this should not be viewed as a step to uphold a hegemony over Shiite Lebanon, it is rather a step to strengthen the military hegemony over the whole of Lebanon. In the eyes of Hizballah and their allies, the Islamic Resistance has become the Lebanese defence force. This is expressed plainly by their ally Michel Aoun, who said that the weapons of the Islamic Resistance should be used to face Israel and those of the Army to prevent internal problems.¹⁷⁷ While resolution 1701 put some pressure on the Islamic Resistance and forced them north of the Litani River (operating undercover south of the river), it has on the other hand led to an expansion of their areas of

¹⁷⁷ Lebanon Now 21.April 2010.

operation. This became evident when fighters from Hizballah shot down a Lebanese Army helicopter in the Sojoud area, claiming that they mistook it for an Israeli one.

It might be that the best expression of how the Shiites view their own position came in a conversation with some people working with Fadlallah in the South. In response to my question about how they viewed the Lebanese state, one of them said: 'We don't have a state here: we have our state here, the State of Hizballah!' Well aware that this statement contradicts the official policy of both Fadlallah and Hizballah, I asked if I could record the answer. She said that was okay, but was cut off by one of the others present, who said: 'Record this: it's not a state, it's an empire and Sayyid Hassan [Nasrallah] is the emperor!'

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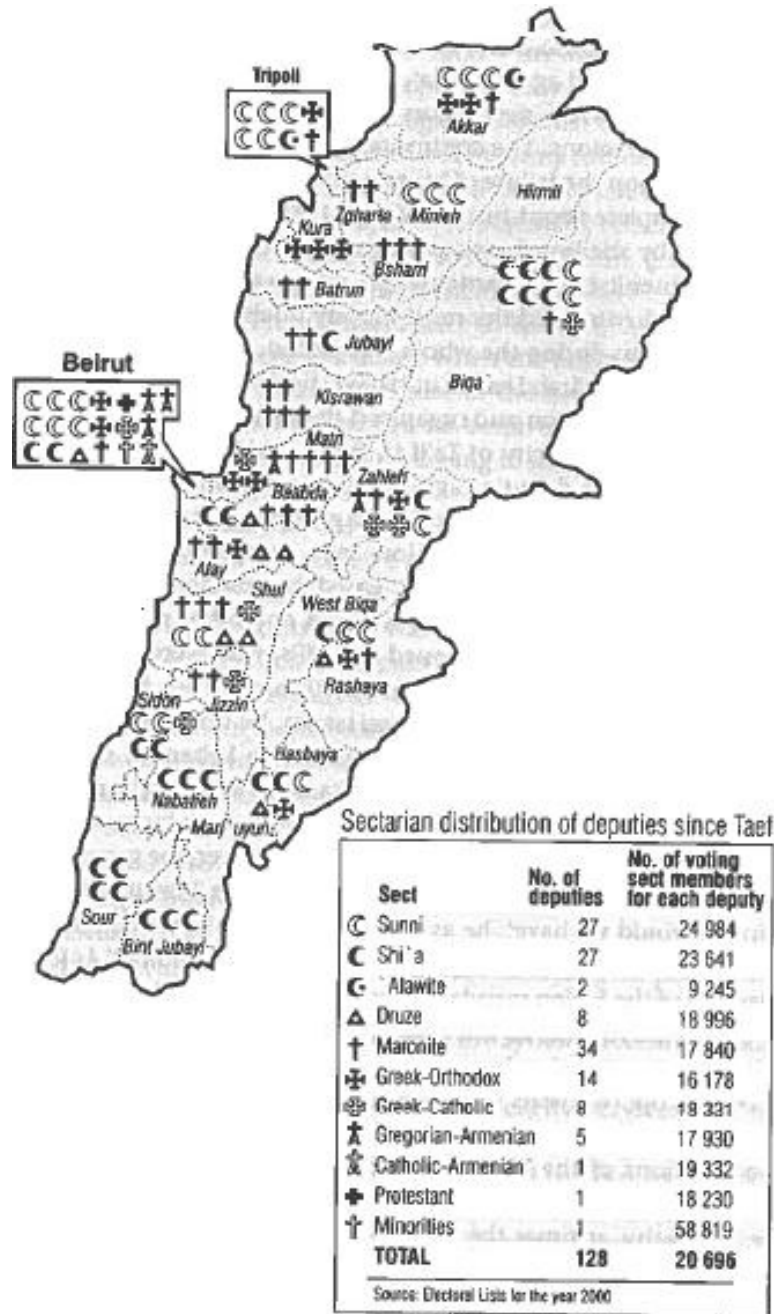
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Appendix



The map is taken from Traboulsi p.241.